Relationship Building with Aboriginal Elders in the Publicly Funded Secondary School Classroom: A Study of Ethical Space from an Aboriginal Perspective

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Abstract

This is a current story of ethical space in education that is often neglected in the design of educational experiences for Aboriginal students. This story is told through an Aboriginal lens rooted in the structured Two Row Wampum Belt relational agreement between Aboriginal peoples and Settlers. Through ethnographic narrative based on an extensive literature review, individual in-depth interviews, and a personal journal, this study documents the processes of acceptance, silence, complications, and then rejection to position Aboriginal Elders as inclusive bodies of knowledge in publicly funded secondary school classrooms. Aboriginal Elders are valued as Knowledge Holders, as Aboriginal teachers, guides, and mentors. Yet, the complexities of colonial rights, politics, and policies continue to intrude deeply into the lives of Aboriginal peoples to cause silence, confusion, and struggle rather than an evolution of new knowledge amongst two co-existing solitudes under the original terms of the Two Row Wampum Belt. The study was delayed and then came to an end when the school boards and local schools scrutinized its operating policies and unresolved funding issues. This study demonstrated that despite the Two Row Wampum Belt agreement that promised a co-existent relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Settlers, the strategy of inviting Aboriginal Elders to work alongside teachers in the classroom was viewed as being in conflict with the Settler's institutional/educational objectivities, and, as such, was denied to Aboriginal students.

Preface

The stories surrounding Aboriginal Elders and their knowledge might be a crucial link in the academic success of Aboriginal students. In Aboriginal communities, educators include those members who have particular sets of knowledge, those who are usually recognized as Elders and who practice the oral tradition. The current education system relegates Aboriginal peoples endowed with specialized and/or lived cultural knowledge, such as Aboriginal Elders/teachers, to the margins in preference to those teachers who attain recognized professional and protected status and authority to deliver a colonial based education.

I took up the task to profile Aboriginal Elders because Indigenous knowledge is not accidental knowledge. Poole (1972) refers to Kierkegaard who said that knowledge "is only possible if the existing individual soaks and saturates his sense of what 'knowledge' is, in his sense of ethical responsibility for it – he personally" (p. 100). Such a definition suggests subjective overtones and is an individual responsibility. But then an Aboriginal Elder will not claim to have all knowledge and be right in his/or her own knowledge. Rather, the thoughts of Aboriginal Elders are interconnected with each other rather than as institutional imperatives.

Poole (1972) refers to institutions in his analysis when he said that abstract thought is "thought without a thinker…Thinkerless thought is mere objectivity - it is a failure of responsibility" (p. 100). Poole quotes Noam Chomsky, who said that an individual's responsibility for knowledge is a duty that exceeds the demands of the academic and professional world. He feels the necessity to move beyond a 'merely cognitive' relation

to his knowledge, and there must be a connection in an ethical relationship to the life-world (p. 104).

The educational system is an institution of gathered knowledge, and it lacks a process for addressing individual requests as an exercise of moral thought. Chomsky says that, "If the fact is morally charged, it therefore follows that no one who feels it to be morally charged is going to be able to discuss it with full objectivity" (as cited in Poole, 1972, p. 119). The process then of presenting facts must not be lifeless and unchallenged. It is a fearful place when objectivity has then been achieved and the features of abstractness prevail. In this regard, Poole again shares Chomsky's words: "Entering into the arena of argument and counter-argument of technical feasibility and tactics, of footnotes and citations, by accepting presumption of legitimacy of debate on certain issues, one has already lost one's humanity" (p. 104). The potential for an individual or group of people to become grossly confused in understanding of what education is and can be, is a conundrum for Indigenous peoples. If education is often viewed as "a tool opposed to the perpetration and continuation of Indigenous Knowledge" (Redwing, Saunders, & Hill, 2007, p. 1024), why am I so focused on carrying out this research to locate a classroom for the placement of an Aboriginal Elder? I do so because I want to challenge the members of those local education systems who serve Aboriginal peoples, to think through the dangers when they assume that success in education is limited to the acquisition of literacy and numeracy. Education is a social and economic exercise. This is a real danger for students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in participating in an institutional academic setting. When all the facts are gathered to profile subjectivities and objectivities, how do we begin to view our own humanity and ability to argue our own

sets of morals? Who can we look to if we do not have a profile of what humanity looks like? Or we do not know how to have an ethical relationship? I believe there needs to be capacity in the world to challenge and charge individual thoughts, to avoid complacency of abstractness. We cannot let frameworks for objectivity become a design to overcome anyone's right to be in ethical space.

At the moment Aboriginal Elders as Knowledge Holders are visible but that population is declining. The purpose of this document is to challenge the members of the publicly funded school system to examine the policies of their institution for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student success within a co-existing relationship whether in or outside the classroom.

There is ethical space and Aboriginal peoples are a part of that space. That space must include the natural order to recognize the next generation of Aboriginal Knowledge Holders who will carry on the responsibilities of life worlds as a process for understanding within their culture. I need to know that after I am gone, my grandchildren will have the knowledge to challenge institutional education objectivities. Perhaps they will be the ones who will lead the lighting of the eighth fire, when the Settlers choose to walk the road *of the Great Law of Peace* and another Wampum Belt will be made to signify that choice.

But for the moment, I take on a responsibility to record what is in education across the cultural divide in ethical space. I direct the reader to listen to the differences in how the facts are presented in the institution of education against the words spoken in the two interviews of this study.

This document records the thoughts, values, and beliefs of Rachel and Rebecca who spoke at their cultural divides as student and educator to share their publicly funded secondary school experiences and stage of wisdom. One day, they will complete their six stages of life, enter the seventh stage to become community recognized Aboriginal Elders, and begin to teach the next generation. I hope they will easily transition into classrooms rather than apply their knowledge exclusively at the margins of ethical space. It is my dream that one day Aboriginal Knowledge Holders will be involved in transforming the margins of educational settings for greater academic success of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Acknowledgments

I express deep love and appreciation first to my enduring life partner who encouraged and supported me throughout this very intensive journey. He kept me focused by reminding me every day that I had a job to do, to move forward and make a new path for the younger generation.

I give my children recognition for challenging me to take this journey. While I struggled to succeed in the unknown territories of higher education, we celebrated graduations as members of the family completed their first grade, finished Grade 8 and went on to high school and college. Every year from now on, we will be celebrating family graduations from high school and wishing each one the best years as they journey on to create a career. If I have influenced any of my children and grandchildren to participate in lifelong learning and knowing their roles and responsibilities as cultural human beings of an original civilization, I am happy. For those children who do not have the same advantages, I hope my work will have an impact to encourage the education system to have all students, whether they are First Nations, Metís, or Inuit, have opportunities to learn from the original Knowledge Holders of Turtle Island.

I must recognize every one of my Dissertation Committee members. First, I recognize my advisor, Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir. Whenever I had a doubt about what I could do, his sure and direct responses were like pinches to keep going because I was capable of doing the job. The job of organizing words into grammatically correct sentences in the English language to create understanding across to another culture is not easy. I could see through his questions and explanations how he interpreted my words and the cross-cultural differences became more real, as he challenged me to write

differently to include a more inclusive audience. I could not have succeeded without the concerns of Dr. Manley-Casimir who pointed out those places where I needed to provide deeper explanations and apply “tricks of the writing trade.”

To committee member Dr. Julian Kitchen, I have been fortunate to have his critical review. His attention to detail and his critical view of how I write has furthered my appreciation for cross-cultural communication through the written word in education.

To committee member Dr. Juanita Epp, I am grateful for her fresh perspective and thoughtful interpretations of my cultural lens. I learned how to present a story of importance into a critical piece of knowledge in the academic world.

Through committee member Dr. Ruby Farrell, I was encouraged to present the power of Aboriginal voices in the midst of my own confusion as the cycle of rejection played out. I am grateful for the voices of Rachel and Rebecca who revealed the intensity of their desires to have community recognized Aboriginal Elders in classrooms. A study of their words offered deep insight into the underpinnings of a cultural divide in education.

Niyahweh, Chi-Miigwetch, Thank you.

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CHAPTER ONE: SITUATING MY LENS AND THEORY

Inevitably, not unlike many theorists, my writing as an Indigenous person is linked to "the specificity" (Papoulias, 2011, p. 69) of my origins. At the time of this writing, I was at the stage of my life within my mixed Ojibwa and Iroquois culture as a First Nations Grandmother. I am familiar with both Anishnaabe (Ojibwa) and Haudensaunee/Iroquois/Six Nations (*Ohngwehonweh)* stories from both sets of Elders. My observations were that Aboriginal peoples were familiar with the processes of prolonged delays to requests for an education that met their needs and then denied access to an education for academic success with their culture intact.

My study was to enable co-relationship building by bringing Aboriginal Elders into the school classrooms within the meanings of the Two Row Wampum Belt as a co-existing relationship between two entities. While initiating the study, I realized that the institution as an educational entity did not have the structure to enable the evolutionary process required for Aboriginal and Settler cultures to accommodate alternative requests, and this is problematic. Aboriginal student and Aboriginal educator interviews confirmed the placement of Aboriginal Elders in the schools' classrooms as an important step for demonstrating original agreements between the Aboriginal and Settler populations.

My parents, grandparents, and ancestors were subjected to the intentional colonial policies meant to remove Indigenous knowledge and connection to the land. The colonial system of education was and remains the primary vehicle in the process to distract Aboriginal students from practicing their culture and knowing the stories connected to their place of origin on a daily basis. There was evidence that the involvement of

Aboriginal Elders was a determining factor for Aboriginal student success (Battiste, 2013; Berger, 2008; Goulet, Pelletier, Pete, et al., 2009; Graham & Ireland, 2008; and Lafrance, 2000).

Aboriginal Elder involvement in the public school system was considered a cross-cultural bridge. Yet, there were conundrums to be addressed. Battiste (2013) promoted success in classrooms when Aboriginal Elders were included in the Aboriginal designed curriculum. Mason (2008) described how the voices of Aboriginal peoples were cut off when their oral teachings were turned into text. Kitchen, Cherubini, Trudeau, and Hodson (2009) offered descriptions of how Aboriginal peoples in their pre-service learning program were considering language and culture in the classroom. There were many unwritten stories tucked away in the recesses of Aboriginal memory waiting to be recovered, shared, and investigated. The story of this study uncovered the lack of progress to identify and establish Aboriginal Elders within public school classrooms. It was an outstanding issue that was not easy to resolve within the colonial institution. However, it was apparent that the lack of understanding by the Settler culture of the Two Row Wampum Belt hindered understandings for relational co-existence across cultures, and this was impacting Aboriginal student academic success in the classroom.

The Lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt

My origins were rooted and grounded in the land as an Indigenous member of original and sovereign peoples who participated in agreements for co-existence on the land rather than as adversaries for land within a multicultural society. When I heard stories as a child, I did not see my ancestors or family as a subject within multiculturalism or as a topic of colonial diversity. My background enabled me to

perceive the current situation in education through an alternative lens that redefined aspects of the convergence of two cultures. Co-existing relationships were extended to Settler peoples. The following clarifies this worldview.

The Term Aboriginal Versus Indian

The term "Aboriginal" replaced the word "Indian" in 2009. "Aboriginal" refers to all Indigenous peoples living in Canada and includes First Nations (living on and off federally reserved land), Metís, and Inuit. First Nations peoples are original peoples who lived uninterrupted on their lands before the arrival of the first Settlers. Over time, the federal government applied assimilation tactics with convoluted terms of treaties and the Two Row Wampum Belt for those living within legislated boundaries of reserves. Thus, I provided an explanation of relationships to the land rather than as possession of territory and this involved rights to an education on equal terms. The term native may also be used according to the author quoted. Indigenous is also used as a global term to indicate connection with original peoples who are undergoing similar difficulties in other countries around the world. Whenever possible, I refer to tribal names of First Nations.

Aboriginal Elders

For purposes of this study, Indigenous/Aboriginal Elders are community recognized Knowledge Holders (KH) while Elders with a small "e" are in training to become Elders or they are not yet at a stage in their life to be supported by their community as an Elder (KH). Additional explanations are outlined in Chapter Three.

Institution

The word institution and derivatives such as institutional discussed throughout this document refer to school systems, whether federally or provincially funded, its

curriculum and organization, and as managed according to the principles, politics, and policies of Settler society. Education is referred to as an institution of knowledge as evident in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures but delivered differently according to the choice of the created vehicle. The public school systems and their classrooms that are referred to in this document are publicly funded, known as mainstream or colonial and are discussed at the level of secondary or high school education.

Wampum

Relationship building was related to the wampum beads, and unfortunately, were virtually unknown by the majority, and perhaps by all, in the provincial education system. Woodward (1878) indicated the use of "the hard parts of shells as an assurance of welcome" (p. 1) were extended to Christopher Columbus in Cuba. The beads were used in the economy of trade amongst Aboriginal peoples. Wampum belts were designed in physical symbolic form as lasting negotiated agreements intended as relationship agreements. They accompanied the making of treaties with the Settler government.

Two Row Wampum Belt

The Two Row Wampum Belt (*Two Row*) is the first cross-cultural relational agreement between Settlers and First Peoples in North America to co-exist as separate entities (see Figure 1). It is threaded with white and purple colored wampum beads. It signifies that an agreement was struck about how to live under the Great Law of Peace (*the Great Law,* see Wallace, 1946) in North America despite two cultural beliefs. The symbolic reference to the parallel lines of *the Two Row* suggested that two solitudes

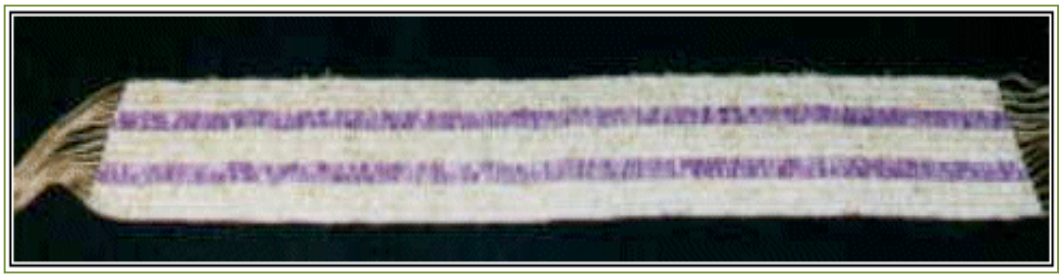

Figure 1. Two Row Wampum Belt.

agreed to live side by side and live together in friendship, peace, and respect. *The Two Row* did not implicate land ownership but rather was a symbolic reference to a relational agreement for co-existence. I understand the differences in relationships amongst two solitudes, as the two parallel purple beaded lines that symbolically represent preferred modes of transportation upon the water. The distance between the two cultures is symbolized as three rows of white beads that exist between the two parallel purple lines.

Water is a common need for all peoples. My worldview is best understood through the metaphors of the Settler ship, the birch bark canoe, the Two Row Wampum Belt and its connections to the Great Law of Peace (*the Great Law*) and which are symbiotically connected with ethical space.

The Settler Ship

The vehicle of the Settler population was a large cumbersome ship with sails, rudders and hierarchy of power and control managed by a leader who must contend with the possibility of mutiny among the unrelated population. The parts to repair the vehicle were not readily available from the natural surroundings, and required selected manufactured parts and specially trained individuals to do the job. The journey itself required each individual to abide by rules and regulations that could change under the force of any group on the ship. The efficiency of the journey required payment of fees from passengers who were not expected to participate in the daily chores as paid labourers.

Birch Bark Canoe

The vehicle of the Aboriginal was family oriented, built to accommodate its members, easily repaired from natural surroundings by any of the adult passengers, and

light enough to be carried on land around obstacles in the water. The canoe was guided under the direction of the individual who knew the water's terrain and was trusted for that knowledge which was shared through the journey.

Water

Water is essential for health and well-being. The canoe leaves no traces of pollution; however, the ships of today are known to leave pollutants and debris. At the time of the design of the Two Row Wampum Belt that recorded the co-existing relationship, the waters were crystal clear and clean. Today, the waters, as well as the Settler understandings for co-existence, are no longer clear. This situation can be termed as muddied disagreements being addressed through the colonial legal system.

Connections of *the Great Law* and the Two Row Wampum Belt

The historical deterioration of relationships between Aboriginal and Settler society affected the Aboriginal paradigm for lifelong learning. The Two Row Wampum Belt was designed in 1613 to record an agreed relationship between the Dutch and Mohawk peoples and then later with the British. It is a simple design but the intent is to relate the terms for co-existence, which included understandings of the Great Law of Peace (*the Great Law*). *The Great Law* speaks about the importance of relational living and includes the ecological and cosmological perspectives as well as the epistemological, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

The Two Row Wampum is an extension of *the Great Law* to express understandings and the terms for relational living in co-existence on Turtle Island, otherwise known as North America (R. Hill, personal communication, January 10, 2011). The story of the Two Row Wampum Belt was fully recognized more than 100 years after

it was introduced, when 24 diverse First Nations peoples, and more than 2,000 people, and Crown officials at the Niagara Treaty of 1764 met to renew their relations (Borrows, 1997; Canada in the Making, n.d.). The Two Row Wampum Belt often accompanied subsequent agreements between the Original Peoples and Settler Peoples on Turtle Island to confirm and bring attention to the original agreement. Amongst Aboriginal people, that original agreement is not forgotten, although the actions of the government insist on denying its existence.

Relational agreements for co-existence between Settlers and First Peoples in North America recognized the other as separate entities. The Two Row Wampum Belt (*the Two Row*) signified that an agreement was struck about how to live under the Great Law of Peace (*the Great Law*) in North America despite two cultural beliefs. The symbolic reference to the parallel lines of *the Two Row* suggested that two solitudes agreed to live side by side and live together in friendship, peace, and respect. *The Two Row* did not implicate land ownership but rather was a symbolic reference to a relational agreement for co-existence. Given the perspective of *the Great Law*, the Two Row Wampum Belt, and the desire by Aboriginal peoples to co-exist, a negotiating situation for the education of their children ought to be possible with greater understanding of Aboriginal philosophy and intent.

Symbolisms of Ethical Space Within the Two Row Wampum Belt

The space between the two purple parallel beaded lines consisting of three white beaded lines of the Wampum Belt is that area where the two cultures can meet to discuss and explore the needs of the other without giving up their freedoms or losing sight of their own beginnings and responsibilities. As I studied Poole's (1972) theory of ethical

space with its definitions of subjectivities and objectivities, I related those three center white rows of beads between the two purple parallel beads of *the Two Row,* as ethical space in education where two solitudes have a history in education as oppressed and oppressor. Poole's (1972) work defined the conflict of cultures as objectivities and subjectivities. He advised a mediator is needed to negotiate across the divide of the institutional culture and the people it proposes it serves.

> Objectivity is what is commonly received as objectively valid, all the attitudes, presuppositions, unquestioned assumptions typical of any society. Objectivity implies the acceptance of the dominant social, ethical, and religious views in that society. Objectivity is, for all practical purposes, the totality of what is taken to be the case, believed to be the case, and affirmed to be the case. Objectivity is the totality of binary opinion on what is acceptable/not acceptable', desirable/not desirable, good/not good, etc. Objectivity in any given society in fact gets defined as the political and social *status quo.* (Poole, 1972, pp. 44-46)

Poole's (1972) definition of subjectivity concerned the intents to address objectivity. Within education, the interpretations of institutional rules and regulations for the education of Aboriginal peoples were a subjective concern. The implications were felt, and there was a need for hard-pressed arguments for more "acceptable standards" (Poole, 1972, p. 152). Poole (1972) described two approaches to meet the institution:

> Two sorts of subjectivity in the world, as different from each other in aims and significance as it is possible to imagine . . . one sort of subjectivity has been shown to be working for betterment of objective conditions and the other has been shown to be intent upon destroying them without parley. (p. 41)

The stance I took in this study was to explore improvements within the school classroom. This document relayed opportunities to negotiate in ethical space. It retrieved a long neglected story of avoidance to address the terms for co-existence amongst two cultural solitudes, which included understandings of Aboriginal Elders as Knowledge Holders and teachers within a lifelong learning paradigm. Poole's (1972) theory is discussed further in Chapter Two.

There was an obvious imbalance of relational conduct as guided through understanding *the Great Law.* The connection between *the Great Law* and the meanings of the Two Row Wampum Belt were strongly interconnected. When ethical space in education from the perspective of the Two Row Wampum Belt was examined, that included understanding *the Great Law* for one's conduct as a human being for daily living amongst all that exists. The story of education from the perspective of Aboriginal peoples included their perspective of Settler people and the wisdom of Aboriginal Elder strategies to preserve culture by transforming similar aspects of Christianity as a social advantage and leverage for the education of their children, rather than engage in civil war. However, the strategy was ignored. Colonial government intentions were not to pursue relational activities but to contain and destroy Aboriginal culture through an efficient and cost effective institutionalized system of education that began with Residential Schools. The colonial ship of education continued to be the vehicle for assimilation of cultures.

Living with Aboriginal Elders

I contemplated my experiences living with Aboriginal Elders, sharing my experiences with secondary students, and searching out academic studies. A pattern of

gaps in the literature became clear. Before I left the safety net of my community family, I had the beginning stories of the past in order to enter the public school system off reserve. One of the stories told to me as a child was about the four Iroquois sachems from the Ohio valley who crossed the ocean and visited Queen Anne of England several times in the early 1700s. One of their requests was for assistance to establish schools. As a result of one trip, a Minister and Schoolmaster were appointed to teach and the Mohawks built a schoolhouse to accommodate 40 children. It was a disappointing start until 1743, when two Mohawk schoolmasters were appointed (Jamieson, 1987, p. 9). Jamieson's story outlined how the Iroquois traded land as payment for British modes of schooling. Land was readily accepted as payment in consideration of Iroquoian loyalty after the American Revolutionary War of 1765. The indication here was that Iroquoian people were attending school, there were individuals prepared to be school masters, and children were successful in their learning.

Issues of who was qualified to teach Aboriginal curriculum in publicly funded classrooms, and who was qualified to negotiate classroom space to include Elders were questions aligned with a co-existing agreement but not clarified within the educational environments of publicly funded schools. I reviewed my story of living with Elders to help the reader understand the cross-cultural gaps in the education of Aboriginal students.

In proving myself to be a cross-cultural educator and researcher, my resolve was to maintain Indigenous knowledge sets as necessary and inclusive for the future education of my grandchildren for seven generations to come. At this juncture, my grandchildren had few opportunities to be in contact with Indigenous Elders in their public school experiences. The issues surrounding identification of Aboriginal Elders

were complex. The institutional system offered written text that defined, described, directed, and offered guidelines through policies. It could not, on its own, capture the quality and community identified acceptance of who was in the publicly funded secondary school as an Aboriginal Elder. Such an act would overstep the relationships amongst Aboriginal peoples and their right to define themselves. There were steps taken that caused the school systems to revert to their policy guidelines in their considerations for accepting Aboriginal Elders within their schools. Not all Aboriginal peoples with knowledge were given the status of Aboriginal Elder, which was acknowledged, by Rachel and Rebecca in their interviews.

I believed Aboriginal peoples were ready to advocate for Aboriginal Elders to establish their roles and responsibilities as guides for secondary school students in the classroom. Aboriginal peoples were confronting the intergenerational impacts of residential school and were searching to address the interruptions it caused to their system of lifelong learning. I believed that relationships developed better when the students listened to the words of an experienced model of who they were expected to become as they went through their stages in life.

Roles and Responsibilities of an Elder

Although there were few studies to connect Aboriginal Elders and students in the publicly funded classroom, Akan (1999), an Aboriginal researcher, had information about how Aboriginal Elders could support students. Akan's presentation of a Saulteaux Elder's cultural view of the drop out phenomena offered insight into the observational skills of Elders. Akan's study did not place Aboriginal Elders in the school classroom. However, Akan's study demonstrated that an Aboriginal Elder could offer direct solutions to the

student struggling with decisions on whether to stay in school or not. The study portrayed an Aboriginal Elder as a keen observer willing to respond to the needs of students.

I related to the Saulteaux Elder's commentary for intergenerational relationships. I appreciated those Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals who influenced me, directed me, and guided me; who modelled specific behaviours; who talked with me about my future; and those who shared their stories, hopes, dreams and skills: these are the individuals I gravitated towards. I have memories of their faces, their expressions, and their tone of voice in all they did and said. Those teachers during my early on-reserve school years were well known throughout my First Nation community. I remembered them well. They helped me to know who lived and worked within the community. I cannot say I remember all my teachers in the publicly funded school system with their non-Aboriginal teachers, nor what they were teaching.

In those early years, I was directed to observe interactions amongst teachers, families, Elders, and students as initial teachings that further reinforced my sensitivity to adapt to social rules outside my First Nation family home and community. Throughout my lifetime, I found many like Akan's (1999) Saulteaux Elder. My experience was that Aboriginal Elders were willing and ready to accommodate my need for a listening, patient, nonjudgemental ear. In the quietness of knowing I was heard, I prepared myself for hearing other perspectives of who I was to become and then guided into another stage of learning. It was my experience that Aboriginal Elders possessed compassionate observational skills.

When family members said "make your ancestors proud," I understood the intended meaning was to recognize the importance of their work and sacrifice. My

ancestors ensured that I would have a future, and that someday it would be my imprint that would impact my grandchildren for seven generations to come. The cycle of generational learning never ended. Thus, through this model, I understood my responsibilities were the same as my ancestors. That intended imprint included not only my relationships to my human relatives and the land but also how to co-exist with my relations that included all living beings—seen and unseen.

Silences

Horne's (1998) article described listening and silences, as pedagogy. He demonstrated his assertions through Slipperjack's (1992) *Silent Words;* I was reminded of how I learned before I went to school. It was the gentle smile and then the offer to do more and eventually to be directed to *do* the work that spurred me on, rather than to be in competition with other students. I was taught to respect and not to challenge the wisdom of my teacher. I trusted the knowledge of my Aboriginal community teachers; that I would be directed to areas of speciality such as when it came to learn about small business, I would spend the day in my great aunt's store. Before I went to the publicly funded school, I knew my family and my community. I had the beginning sense of my responsibilities towards living a good life amongst and with all my relations.

When I entered the public school system, I was challenged to express my knowledge through instantaneous verbal responses. I realized I could not, and was marked accordingly as not having the capacity to participate. Nor was I taught to teach in such a manner. I did my best to teach in the same cultural way I was taught without so many words. I learned to listen, watch, and learn in order to act. In my close-knit

subjective world, listening was expected and deemed to be the highest order for learning and there were no silences if one listened intently enough.

I enjoyed the soft silences more than the competitive noise. In silence, all the operative senses were at the optimum. It was a slippery activity to accurately rate, evaluate, and apply a subjective label such as appreciation and experience with each layer of sensory awakenings routed to the hypothalamus as memory. Jamieson (1987) worded this as, "Appreciation of all the things which was their experience was the only real benchmark" (p. 3). I pondered that this appreciation seemed so simple in a subjective social world but avoided in an economically designed world with its objectivities and commitment to materialism. Profit from stripping the land of its resources negated the purpose for existence upon the earth. The language of Indigenous peoples promoted relations and that included all that exist on the land, in the water, in the air, and through the fire. Who was best trained to incorporate intergenerational knowledge than those who most appreciate all things as being interconnected and based on their lifelong cultural experiences as combined with previous disciplined generational knowledge sets, than the older generation of Indigenous peoples? The challenge was to contemplate the power of that knowledge as consistently evolving when assessed against text and orality of Elders.

Intergenerational Teachings

In conflicts between home and school, I assumed my role as a cultural bridge to assist parents and grandchildren with the words they need to speak with kindness and patience when addressing the public school staff. I was aware of Diane Longboat's (2012) words: "When the school finds itself in conflict with that of the home, there is a greater risk that the negative relationship can contribute to poor mental health,

depression, violence, suicide or substance abuse" (p. 8). I sat often with the non-Aboriginal friends of my children and grandchildren to talk about cultural conflicts and shared what I knew through stories. Often, these stories were integrated into the mealtime conversations or during creative endeavours such as beading, leatherwork, quilting, or enjoying the outdoors—much in the same manner as I was taught. As I reflected on those times, I realized how various Aboriginal Elders influenced the way I teach and confront the Settler's system of educating.

I heard about the negative impacts of the residential school education system from those family members who left it. I personally experienced the overt ignorance of teachers and fellow students within the publicly funded school. I learned through experience that the focus was to teach compliance and live under a non-cultural regime rather than in respectful consideration of a first people with whom there was *the Two Row* agreement. I struggled to maintain my poise and confidence as a human being with inherent rights amongst the taunts, rejections, and physical abuse during my public school experiences. I endured the rejections when I asked for assistance from my non-Aboriginal peers in high school. I was grateful for the messages of the older members of my family who told me stories through which I gained understandings of how to relate to the Settler population. I am grateful for the culture I was born into with the community knowledge of relationship building. The knowledge of those Aboriginal Elders came from the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt. The understandings of *the Two Row* did not belong in the past; it was designed to address concepts applicable to the present and the future. I am also grateful for those who were allied friends and supported my journeys to learn more about the worldviews of the Settler's for public education.

Those Elders in my life told stories and helped me to maintain my identity as indigenous to the land, to know how to conduct my relationships with Settlers, and to realize my responsibilities to all living things to ensure their future. This would mean standing up and speaking on their behalf, to bring about awareness that there is life surrounding the two-leggeds who can exist without human beings. It is human beings who are dependent on whatever exists around them.

Orality and Symbolic References

The oral tradition had its own discipline for passing on knowledge through language that included relationships. The thoughts and verbal expressions of Aboriginal Elders held consistent messages and stories about living a good life according to *the Great Law.* Humans throughout the ages who were in connection with the land provided a learner of oral tradition with certain symbols as mnemonics to help route the memory as an experience. I held close and treasured my personal bundle, a decorative bag that contained the physical references to knowledge sets as provided to me by my Aboriginal Elder teachers on how to live according to *the Great Law*. Each item was an important symbolic benchmark of my success to learn within Iroquois and Ojibwa concepts about successful living. Each item in the bundle was evidence of my progression through various stages of life and each item was an indication that I successfully demonstrated my understandings of a good life. My symbolic prizes were not like the static sheets of papers stamped and signed in recognition of institutional academic achievements and social advancement. Those papers deteriorate with age if not carefully framed. My prizes were not marketable in Settler cognitive terms, except, perhaps, as anthropological treasures. My bundle of symbolic references will pass on to another generation to carry

on the practice of traditions as expected to fulfill Indigenous Elder knowledge sets. My storied references to each symbol, like the design of the Two Row Wampum Belt appear simplistic, but may be complex to those who might hear it for the first time. It cannot be written and preserved in time; the listener might misunderstand it. I grieved for the extent of cultural loss when Aboriginal Elders' words were captured and translated into textbooks (Longboat, 2008a). I argued that with words in written text, students lose the intricacies of learning how to authentically integrate Aboriginal knowledge. I argued for the accommodation of Aboriginal Elders with their oral system to become entrenched within the provincially funded school system so that both Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students might benefit in their understandings of how *the Great Law* was a catalyst for good living and lifelong learning.

I argued that Elder knowledge sets include their experienced stories, their modelling of behaviour, their wisdom, their vision, and their relations with family and community. It was important to hear Indigenous stories from those who received it, experienced it, and interpreted how it was current and pertinent to the present and for the future. Aboriginal experienced knowledge was a missing link in the academic success of Aboriginal students in the publicly funded classroom. It was not known how such knowledge might benefit the non-Aboriginal student. The education system did not purposefully arrange bridge building between Settler and Aboriginal groups as ongoing intention to encourage the academic success of students along with relationship building across cultures.

Critical contact was an ongoing situation since the arrival of the Settlers. As such, the relationships amongst Aboriginal peoples and the generations of Settlers were

engaged, disengaged, and reengaged in different acts of intents to live in co-existence, or not, and therein is the jagged landscape of ethical space. The cultural divide was a distant, non-relational, jagged, liminal gap of space at the boundaries of the two cultural solitudes—each had its own cultural imperatives concerning successful living on Turtle Island/North America.

I understood the story of the Two Row Wampum Belt as an extension of the Great Law of Peace. The oral words memorized throughout the ages were emotional, relational, transformational, and enlightened experiences via an Aboriginal person who was trained to orally transmit stories and offered the Thanksgiving Address in their cultural language. A trained speaker was successful in identifying and expressing relational connections of animate and inanimate beings as physical and spiritual. The Orator who expressed experiences and relationships through the Mohawk Thanksgiving Address (Cradleboard Teaching Project, n.d.), referred to Elders as "Enlightened and caring teachers" in this excerpt from the Thanksgiving Address:

> *The Enlightened Teachers***:** We gather our minds to greet and thank the Enlightened Teachers who have come to help throughout the ages. When we forget how to live in harmony, they remind us of the way we were instructed to live as people. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to these caring Teachers. (Cradleboard Teaching Project, n.d.)

The translation of this address clearly indicated Indigenous Elders as Enlightened Teachers, and included those who were not visible and were from the past. This reference was different from the common Settler title of Teacher.

The knowledge gap about Aboriginal Elders and their educative role covered a large number of years. Stories of their struggle presented co-existing meanings, interpretations, and understandings for a good life across cultural barriers. Those stories included an eerie silence as the ethical space for inclusion of First Peoples was threatened with annihilation. In the present education system, Indigenous students brought forward their cultural experiences, understandings for living, and knowledge, but could not explain the differences against the heterogeneous story of colonial education (Longboat, 2008b).

One of the tasks for research amongst Aboriginal peoples was to share local stories by Aboriginal peoples about their education, and that was difficult. Aboriginal peoples were continually challenged to contend with their personal experiences while enduring the backlashes of the colonial education system that included the intergenerational trauma of life in residential schools. It was anticipated it would be difficult for Aboriginal Elders to enter the classroom for reason of their past treatment, Settler education experiences, and their lack of Settler academic qualifications.

Oral stories about living a good life in peace were told to me in such a way that they were embedded in my heart, mind, body, and spirit in much the same way as told by Archibald (2008). I teach my grandchildren in the same manner as the Elders taught me. The Elders who taught and guided me gave me a sense of well-being, confidence, self-esteem, and safety within my community and culture. However, times were changing; the older Aboriginal population was diminishing. The statistics were troubling, “About 6% of the total Aboriginal population were seniors aged 65 and over, less than half of the seniors in the non-Aboriginal population (14.2%)” (Turner, Crompton, & Langlois,

2011). There was a sense of urgency to determine the numbers of available Elders, and the numbers who had the traditional outlook to become Elders with the attributes for teaching upcoming Elders.

I argued that the current public education system, with its carefully constructed nest of rights, policies, and politics, could purposefully engage Aboriginal Elder presence in the provincially funded classroom as a co-existing partnership initiative to transform teacher practices and to endorse interrelational concepts. In my approach, I studied and confronted the complexities of rights, politics, and policies of the current standard status quo provincially funded education system. The classroom experience accepted curriculum based on multiculturalism and diversity, but avoided recognizing the situational and educational context of North American First Peoples. This was racist as it avoided addressing their culture and sovereignty in their own language and with their own stories.

Cognitive Imperialism

Battiste (1993) offered some insight into racism by labelling it as cognitive imperialism. She spoke of cognitive imperialism as the "ideology of oppression which negates the process of knowledge as a process of inquiry to explore new solutions" (p. 9) as "a form of manipulation" (p. 161) and "control mechanisms" (p. 164). Education designed by and delivered by First Nation people remains unattainable and continuously under the control of Indian Affairs and their federal departments. Imperialism in education led cultural minorities in Canada "to believe that their poverty and powerlessness are the result of their cultural and racial origins rather than the power relations that create inequality in a capitalistic economy" (Battiste, 1993, p. 161). Rather

than recognized as sovereign nations with co-existent rights, Indigenous peoples were labelled as minorities and were treated with immigrant status.

Within textbooks and media, Indigenous peoples were portrayed as a vanishing race, as gallant, yet, wretchedly poor and defeated people when no war was imposed. The texts, storybooks, radio, movies, ads, and symbolic mascots continued to market this illusion. The general public did not notice when their legislating leaders created new boundaries and herded Aboriginal peoples out of the public view and onto reservations to be guarded and contained under the watch of Indian Agents. One of the greater atrocities was to remove the children and place them in residential schools to be forcefully educated into becoming colonized citizens. Stories were told that the Elders died grieving for the loss of their children who would have carried forward the knowledge sets required to maintain the teachings of the Great Law of Peace. Once the governing bodies felt the Aboriginal peoples were contained and subjected, they offered the First Peoples incentives to participate and enjoy the rights as asserted in the colonized world.

The outcomes of the heinous school plan were an ongoing contention. First Nations sovereign peoples were approached as immigrated Canadian citizens and, therefore, the colonial assertion was that Indigenous culture and place become appropriated and legislated under Canadian Settler interpretations of rights, policies, and politics. Woo (2011), a legal scholar, asserted this theoretical position:

> The dynamic at play seems to reflect a key element of the colonial phenomenon that has been discussed at length by theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said: the differentiation of the colonized[88]. As Said pointed out, the classification

> of Natives as an exotically inferior other was essential to the process used to justify cultural domination. (p. 56)

The identified modes of domination continue in forms, perhaps not realized. Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, & Zine (2000) spoke of ethics when knowledge was shared across cultures. The rights to that knowledge must be recognized and not targeted as an appropriated colonial measure:

> As we seek to integrate these knowledges into the conventional school systems, we must guard against appropriation and misappropriation. This is a contemporary challenge for educators. The process of validating Indigenous knowledges must not lead to Indigenous peoples losing control and ownership of knowledge. In other words, it must be recognized that these knowledges are valid in their own right and that the process of bringing them into the academy should not itself constitute the measure of validation. (Dei et al., 2000, p. 47)

There was a difference between oral and textual presentations. The issue was how to recognize the holder of knowledge as an oral speaker with power and control over their knowledge rather than an exotic curiosity whose words were to be captured into appropriated text.

The academic world expected documents of evidence before any knowledge was validated. However, whenever the presenter was brought forward into a circle of academics, that presenter could be considered a captured vessel of knowledge. In traditional Aboriginal terms, if data existed in knowledge, that data could not be ethically shared unless the presenter deemed the situation as warranted. How that knowledge was acquired is related to "Indian methodologies …thought of as alternative ways of thinking

about research processes and have their own ethical guidelines" (Battiste, 2013, p. 76). An Aboriginal Elder in the publicly funded classroom needed a clearly stated policy to protect the knowledge that was shared after years, decades, and centuries of methodological study that evolved into a continuous story from one lived life to another. Battiste (2013) offered this explanation; "The fullest expression of a peoples' ethics is represented in the lives of the most knowledgeable and honourable members of the community, often considered respectfully as the Elders or knowledge holders" (p. 76).

The terms of the Two Row Wampum exemplified the conditions for sharing knowledge as two separate but co-existing entities. Yet, academics strove to find the loopholes for gaining authority over Indigenous knowledge despite straightforward language that discourages such activity. This revealed another conundrum. How did teachers and their supervisors interpret ethics and policy when the local provincially funded school system offered blanket curriculum for all cultural groups? The story of this conundrum began after successful attempts by Aboriginal people to control their education. Their requests for financial support was met with silence and a period of waiting, only to learn of policies designed to capture First Nations, Metís, and Inuit peoples into residential schools.

Although the first Industrial Labour School (later called Residential School) opened in 1840, the last federally funded residential school did not close its doors until 1996 in Saskatchewan. First Nations students attended provincial schools in 1951 through an agreement by the province and the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND), now called Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). The policy for integrating students in the school system and the use of provincial

curricula was criticised by the Auditor General in 2000, 2004, and 2010:

> For not being able to determine if it is meeting its stated objectives in closing the educational gap, as well as not having clarity in its goals, roles and responsibilities in the federal structure of AANDC in education…an unsettling enterprise of education programming on First Peoples without accountability and adequate funding. (Battiste, 2013, p. 60)

The links between Aboriginal peoples, their education, their knowledge systems, ethical guidelines, adequate funding and curriculum, did not connect as a provincial imperative. AANDC continued to benefit as a growing enterprise of human resources poised to forcefully extract resources from the land for financial gain but there was no plan for monetary restitution to Aboriginal peoples to support their culturally designed solutions to address their needs. The connections between Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development, curriculum, the Prime Minister, and the Crown, were self-evident but not written into the curriculum. The bottom line was that the current curriculum was not meeting the needs of Aboriginal students for their academic and social success. The province created a new policy.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b) First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework, was a limited, formulated direction of commitment to Aboriginal student success such as expressed, "Through cooperation and partnerships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit families, communities, and organizations, First Nation governments and education authorities, school boards, other Ontario ministries, the federal government, the Ontario College of Teachers, and faculties of education" (p. 9) in

literacy and numeracy. The document indicated that through research there might be strategies to further effective practices to assist Aboriginal student success.

All identified parties were encouraged to seek additional measures that would contribute to meeting the framework goals, particularly strategies that reflected local circumstances (north/south, rural/urban), as they implemented the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (OME, 2007b, p. 9). One concerning issue was about who designed and interpreted the research within a framework that consisted of a limited set of guidelines for Aboriginal student success. I queried what the publicly funded education system offered for the next generation of Aboriginal peoples and how the students identified success with their culture and language intact.

My work and my message were to review what my Aboriginal grandparents and other grandparents passed onto me since childhood: "Stay in school but don't forget who you are." The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996) reflected this same message from Aboriginal Elders across Canada. I had been grounded to know who I was and what was possible in life. I regretted that through no fault of my own, I did not speak fluently either language of my parents and grandparents. Yet, I understood what this sacrifice meant.

There were Aboriginal students who were not sure of who they were and what they could accomplish. I met many students who lacked relationships with aunties, grandparents, and Elders and I was surprised by their admissions that I filled a relational gap for them as an auntie or grandmother, whether from within the community or in the school setting. Together, we grieved that we did not know one another's ancestral language but we found we talked a symbolic knowledge that consisted of behaviours and

voice. The unspoken thoughts were what would be the next cultural safety hurdle after high school. What were the chances that they would have contact with another bridge building Elder? Teachers in publicly funded school classrooms indicated a desire to learn more about Aboriginal methods of transforming knowledge but there were no studies on how to learn from the Elders in their classrooms.

In Ontario, there were promising designs to incorporate the knowledge of Aboriginal Elders in higher education. Queen's University (2002) revealed its desire to "improve Aboriginal students' access to . . . Elders, including maintaining an Elder or Traditional Aboriginal Person in residence" (para.18). Trent University (2008) presented its position for "appointing Aboriginal Elders and traditional people to faculty positions recognizing their traditional knowledge, wisdom, and skills as the equivalent to university graduate degrees since 1975" (p. 2).

Trent University (2008) accepted Elders as knowledgeable teachers and at par in the academic world. Jake Thomas (1989), a Cayuga Elder of the Six Nations Confederacy, was one of the first to be recognized in such a manner. In the 1970s, "The University took an important step in acknowledging Aboriginal Elders when it awarded academic tenure to Professor Jake Thomas, thus acknowledging the validity of Aboriginal wisdom as equivalent to scholarly knowledge earned through academic degrees" (Kulchyski, McCaskill, & Newhouse, 1999/2003, p. xvii). The knowledge held by Jake Thomas was validated by his community.

Aboriginal Elder and Professor Jake Thomas' knowledge of relational living was ingrained within the conceptual story of *the Great Law* and preserved through an audio recorder in 1994 (Jake Thomas Learning Centre, n.d.). His words in the Cayuga language

were studied and transcribed into text as Cayuga language first before translated into the English language. It was anticipated that this work would be completed in another four to five years after the first ten years of dedication since 1994 (R. Hill, personal communication, January 10, 2010). This activity of writing into text signalled changes in the ethical manner of passing on Aboriginal knowledge through oral teachings. I was concerned that transcribing oral knowledge signalled more difficult times as the colonial world ignored the orator's voice rather than encouraged compassion towards *the Great Law*. It was my belief that Aboriginal Elders were needed now more than ever at the provincial secondary school level.

There was evidence of Aboriginal student success when Elder knowledge "systematically incorporates" (Hesch, 1996, p. 285) such as in a community-university based bi-cultural partnership in Saskatchewan at the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. In that case and others, the numbers of non-Aboriginal educator allies were high enough to explicate the risks to advance the academic cause. Allied partnerships were the future force of hope across cultural relationships (Davis, 2010) once legislation concerning provincial and federal jurisdictional issues over education was discussed with Aboriginal parties. A culturally safe learning environment was successfully ameliorated with the involvement of Aboriginal Elders as demonstrated in this bi-cultural case. Brascoupé and Waters (2009) covered the basics of cultural safety for Aboriginal peoples.

Cultural Safety

Brascoupé and Waters (2009) submitted cultural safety was an issue to contend with Aboriginal peoples who were portrayed through data as voiceless, socially pathological, and resisting Settler education. They were in need of protection and

separation from the colonial Settler historical perspective; they needed validation and insights into their stories; and they needed opportunities to voice their values and beliefs in tandem with the documented causal factors of their realities. The data were translated in ways that suggested Aboriginal peoples were inefficient, irresponsible, and law defying through headlines such as "Aboriginal children representing almost half of all children under 14 years of age [are] in foster care" (Assembly of First Nations, AFN, 2013).

Newly released data from the National Household Survey suggested that of the approximately 30,000 children in care in Canada in 2011, 14,225 were Aboriginal. Overall, 4% of aboriginal children were in care, compared to a scant 0.3% of non-Aboriginal children, or 15,345 children (Woods & Kirkey, 2013, para. 2, 3).
Other data supported headlines that confronted the realities of Aboriginal student retention for their economic, academic, and life success. Battiste (1993) referred to their storied outcomes as cognitive imperialism.

- The number of Aboriginal students who do not complete high school,
- The high rates of poverty,
- The large number of incarcerated men and women,
- The high rate of suicide.

The success of Aboriginal students in education was also linked to their social, academic, and financial accomplishments.

The subjectivities of Aboriginal student life might be safely addressed in the design of ethical spaces in the publicly funded school. As separate physical spaces, ethical space was not always available in schools to meet such needs. It was time to

explore how educational leaders operated ethical spaces in their classrooms with cultural safety as a factor and with a structure that associated a community supported, knowledgeable Aboriginal Elder working alongside a Teacher.

Centering Current Circumstances

"What is at stake here is control over history" said Julian Falconer, lawyer for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Galloway, 2012, para. 5). The context of the current situation for Aboriginal peoples in Canada, which involved their rights, the current policies and politics, was about control. The most worrisome theme was how the control of education dangled over the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Relations of power, language, intent, funding, and control issues were at the crux of an underlying and current dilemma—largely ignored as a non-reporting affair by the media. The effect was a mellowing of interest by the Canadian public. After they expressed their concern that again Aboriginal people were draining the nation's coffers, they perceived Indigenous interests and contextual situations were of no consequence to their everyday lifestyles so long as resources were extracted for the global index. History camouflaged the stories of injustices, as endured by Aboriginal peoples, through political intents and government policies that made them invisible. Aboriginal traditional knowledge sets and cultural stories based on lifelong learning and as foundational in their education and as delivered by Knowledge Holders, was a pragmatic administrative issue.

Indigenous responses to protect their human rights and rights to education were diverted into a series of legal exposés ranging from rights to land, knowledge, language, removal of their children, and identity. These traumas were not limited to adults. The act of removing the identity of Aboriginal peoples was extended to Aboriginal students who

were not identified as residents of their First Nation. They were slipped under the authority and mercy of the provincial umbrella to be educated in literacy and math and most likely without cultural support to have their needs met. The injustices portrayed in education were sensationalized as the forceful removal, segregation, and abuses of pagan Aboriginal children during the church and government controlled residential school period and on into the present day as ineffectual, powerless, and angry Aboriginal protestors. The knowledge of Aboriginal people and their capacity to be innovative and collaborative entities under the guidance of Aboriginal Elders were ignored. Instead, it was the prerogative of provinces and universities to grant training and certification to Aboriginal peoples as publicly funded teachers. Despite evidence that teachers recognized the presence of Aboriginal Elders as beneficial for Aboriginal student success, there was insistence that legislation limited the accreditation process to carry forward such an initiative. The inevitably of such a venture required additional funding.

In 2008, a tribal education leader presented a simple solution to a standing committee on finance and economic affairs pre-budget consultation. The education leader said, “Include the First Nations in the discussion” (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, LAO, 2008, 1109, last paragraph). At the centre of First Nations jurisdictional issues with the province and federal governments was the lack of intergovernmental discussion on how to streamline and adequately fund First Nation lifelong treaty rights to their education. The presentation included involving First Nations representatives, and giving First Nations peoples space to argue their perspectives.

In matters of curriculum development, the education leader recognized money meant to target Aboriginal student academic success in literacy and writing went to

provincial school boards. The First Nations advisory group did not have a say into how it was used despite their succinct knowledge of their community driven student successes (LAO, 2008, 1110, para. 7). Legislative correspondence did not offer directives on how First Nations or Aboriginal organizations could access those provincial funds to address their situations for an improved educational experience. The educational leader suggested the need for more First Nation involvement not only in funding issues but also to assure the truth in curriculum: "The truth has to come from within our own First Nations, within our own Elders. It should be proposal driven, where provincial organizations cannot access those funds unless they have aboriginal partnerships" (LAO, 2008, 1110, para. 9). This truth was found in curriculum, in cross-cultural awareness, sensitivity training, and native studies, and language. Through partnerships, the truth was found within Indigenous Elders. Yet, as the tribal representative argued, there was no formal avenues to access Elder knowledge with the same formal recognition given to teachers.

> We do not have the speakers qualified under the Ontario College of Teachers rules —we do have Elders, we do have our traditional speakers that hold the knowledge, but they can't access the school boards. The school boards are crying, "We can't find teachers who are qualified." But you're looking in the wrong place. You're not looking at the aboriginal qualifications. You're not looking at the traditional knowledge that these Elders have, our traditional speakers. To us they're the highest-valued teachers within our communities and they're the ones holding the knowledge, except we can't access them into the school boards because of the way the legislation is set up. (LAO, 1110, para. 12)

Aboriginal Elders were "the highest-valued teachers" within Aboriginal communities. Yet, the publicly funded classroom did not recognize them. It remained to be seen whether at any time the Ontario College of Teachers' rules would incorporate Elders with their knowledge intact rather than as knowledge extracted and appropriated for classroom use.

The tribal member voiced a solution; ethical space as a best practice such as found in an Aboriginal resource room with a full-time worker at a secondary school. Although the school board (provincially funded) provided the space, the worker was funded with First Nation (federally funded) monies. The tribal representative hinted there was inconsistency of federal funds.

> Part of the problem is that there's no continued funding. The school boards are asking First Nations to fund their salaries. With the new monies coming in, there should be money dedicated to setting up these native resource rooms with all provincial schools with high aboriginal populations…it's just a really good way to keep the students in school. (LAO, 2008, 1119, para. 14)

Not every school within the two school boards of the targeted geographic locale accommodated a native resource room in their secondary schools. Without First Nation dollars and agreements, a worker was not in place. The Aboriginal resource room could not exist without the local agreements between the local school and local First Nation community(ies). Despite partnership building efforts, Aboriginal advisory group core funding within the two school boards was pulled from that same funding pot when it needed to be designed as a separate operating budget for that purpose (LAO, 2008, 1110, para. 17).

The tribal educational leader indicated that funding was a concern in 2008 and this study revealed there was still an ongoing concern. Further, the tribal member's message was that solutions to include Aboriginal Elders were ignored. There were questions about the value of Aboriginal Elders in the school system from an Aboriginal perspective. There were assumptions across cultures about relationships within the institutional educational system.

Assumptions

The history of education for Aboriginal peoples was expressed as a record with pathological dimensions (Bear Nicholas, 2008; Chrisjohn & Young, 2006; Miller, 1996) that needed to be ameliorated. There was evidence that the solutions offered by Aboriginal peoples fell on deaf ears of policy makers (Bear Nicholas, 2008; Maclean, 2002; National Indian Brotherhood (NIB), 1972; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996; Smith, 1987). McNaughton and Rock (2003) advocated a shift in research as "moving away from what was characterized in the Dialogue as a persistent 'epidemiological emphasis on the negative' in Aboriginal research"[26] (p. 5).

The treatment of Aboriginal peoples by the Canadian government was designed to create publicity and stifle stories in such ways as to have the general public believe that Aboriginal student failures were based on the lack of managerial and administrative capacity of their communities (Bear Nicholas, 2008; MacLean, 2002). The demise of the Attawapiskat community and the fast by Chief Spence in 2012 was a prime example. Although the Prime Minister governed and released budgets for First Nation peoples under the federal government and directly, the terms of agreement were issues associated with the British North America Act of 1867 and subsequent treaties. "Basically, the

British North America Act, as the first constitution of Canada, created dual systems of education, and health, one for provincial citizens and one for First Nations" (Battiste, 2013, p. 52). The Canadian government acting as the "Honor of the Crown" was obligated to address treaty obligations and the *Indian Act* became the administrative model with Indian Agents to monitor the activities of their wards.

> First Nations saw these obligations [treaties] as sacred promises for their friendship, moving and allowing settlement on their lands, while subsequent governments saw these treaties as ways to get more land and as part of their assimilation plan to be conveniently forgotten until they needed them. (Battiste, 2013, p. 52)

The issues and facts were not new to Aboriginal peoples and this was a frustrating aspect of their daily lives that the general public lacked education about these matters. Yet, Aboriginal peoples continued to refer to the Two Row Wampum Belt and remind Settler peoples that they were under Treaty obligations to live under terms for co-existence rather than promote oppression of the original landowners.

The most recent story played out by Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence in her bid to bring to light the futile conditions of her community brought much criticism and resistance for compassionate assistance and lobbying efforts by the Canadian public, but her actions did attract the attention of the United Nations. The treatment of Aboriginal peoples for their social and economic needs was under a microscope of criticism worldwide. It was not the intent of this study to dredge out historical grudges, but rather allow a peaceful reconciliation process of study to include the knowledge of Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded classrooms.

Through the "benevolent" (Cherubini, 2010, p. 14) position of the Ontario Ministry of Education as framed in the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework and Building Bridges documents (OME, 2007a, 2007b), publicly funded schools were encouraged to design strategies to close the national gap of low academic achievement of Aboriginal students in comparison to non-Aboriginal student successful outcomes (Office of the Auditor General, OAG, 2005). Aboriginal Elders were not, however, implicated as traditional teachers, or with capability to teach, in a publicly funded classroom as a possible solution.

By reviewing the history and analyzing the stories around the neglect of the colonial education system to recognize Aboriginal Elders, local school boards and local school systems did not imagine a strategy to decolonize itself through a different set of lens, a perspective that offers cross-cultural, co-existing, community solutions with the involvement of Indigenous Knowledge Holders as Indigenous Elders and those Elders who are in training to become Elders.

Statement of the Problem

Aboriginal peoples had solutions to their own problems and Aboriginal Elders in the classroom was an unaddressed solution. Government reports continued to confirm that Aboriginal students lagged behind their non-Aboriginal peers in the provincial school system such as demonstrated in federal documents from the OAG (2005) and Council of Ministers of Education (CME; 2008). Such reports added to the detail of local needs such as the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b), Province of British Columbia (2005), and the Policy Research Initiative Horizons Team (PRI; 2008). The responses to the federal and provincial reports were empirical calls to train teachers in Aboriginal

pedagogy. Local studies to address teacher education such as those conducted by Barnhardt (1974, 1977) in Alaska, Berger (2008) in Inuit territory, and Cherubini & Hodson (2008) in the Anishnabe Aski territory, offered insights into preferable pedagogy to meet the learning styles and community expectations of Aboriginal students. The environment of schools and the classrooms that supported Aboriginal student success were described by St. Denis (2010) in her interviews with teachers, while Wotherspoon and Schissel (2003) spoke to the legacy of school for Aboriginal children as education, oppression, and emancipation. Wotherspoon (2006, 2007, 2008) queried teachers' work in Aboriginal communities, and, Wotherspoon and Schissel (1998, 2000) addressed potential success in Aboriginal education. Sinclair (2004) advocated for the involvement of Aboriginal Elders in roles for monitoring cultural safety and preferable teaching methods. Despite the support of such research by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (2007) and the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT; 2006, 2010), the presupposition that Aboriginal Elders working as professional resources to provide assistance and life experience perspectives in the provincial publicly funded school classroom setting was not yet presented as a popular discourse. It was anticipated that Aboriginal Elder support, such as in the classroom working alongside teachers, might contribute to transformative teaching practices to impact:

(a) An increase in Aboriginal student achievements;

(b) Reduced gaps in achievement;

(c) Increased level of community involvement; and

(d) Increased level of public confidence. (OME, 2007b)

Battiste (2013) described schools that included community Elders as, “Successful schools also enlist Elders, and draw on their wisdom and knowledge, and in so doing, reinvigorate the customary role of Elders as transmitters of traditional knowledge” (p. 156). Battiste (2013) spoke about implementing a framework for language programs to include Elders who are involved in “developing authentic means of assessing student progress” (p. 154). Battiste’s (2013) arguments signalled the need for transformative pedagogy across Canada, or at the very least, province by province with the inclusion of Aboriginal designed solutions for Aboriginal Elder involvement.

The OME (2007b) did not outline a pedagogical strategy for a cultural design that would meet the needs of Aboriginal students and support their desires to achieve. Historically, Aboriginal peoples were treated as a racial group needing a Euro-Western education rather than being approached as co-designers for cross-cultural education. The work of Dei, (1999), Ladson-Billings (2006), Levine-Rasky (2000), and North (2008) opened conversations around the advantages that racism provided privileging colonial paradigms. Alfred (1999) called for Aboriginal peoples to remember who they were as undefeated and sovereign peoples who lived under the Great Law of Peace. Chrisjohn and Young (2006), and Miller (1996) detailed the atrocities of residential schools as an educational tool that undermined Aboriginal success to live a good live. As co-designers, and with knowledge of the undercurrents in ethical space, Aboriginal peoples offered solutions, such as reduced gaps in achievement by exploring alternate measurements for success, such as leadership through Aboriginal Elders in the classroom, to involve Aboriginal community.

School districts in other provinces, described in studies by Graham and Ireland (2008) in British Columbia and Goulet et al. (2009) in Saskatchewan, documented evidence of Aboriginal Elders who worked with teachers in schools. However, these studies did not indicate purposeful matching of a teacher and Aboriginal Elder as a study of classroom outcomes, or transformations of teaching practice.

Purpose of the Study

There were a majority of teachers who were non-Aboriginal (CTF, 2007). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b) suggested an additional set of pedagogical skills would be useful for addressing the needs of Aboriginal students. The students requested Aboriginal Elders in the public school classroom (Longboat, 2008; Ontario Minister's Student Advisory Council, 2009; RCAP, 1996). The requests by students were strong indicators that additional sets of pedagogical skills were needed, and that Aboriginal Elders validated as community Knowledge Holders might fulfill both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student needs in the classroom.

However, consistent with the theory of ethical space was the resistance of the institution to welcome a different culture, such as Aboriginal Elders, as educators. Adding another layer of challenge to ethical space when two cultural knowledge systems meet was an obvious conundrum in the publicly funded classroom.

The outcomes of this study defined the perimeters for addressing Aboriginal student concerns as requests to have Aboriginal Elders in their classrooms. Without the connectedness between Aboriginal Elders, the students of Aboriginal communities and the teachers in the publicly funded classroom, the relational distance between teacher and Aboriginal student may continue to be a reality outlier.

Research Questions

The questions that guided the research were useful during the literature review, the interviews, and in the analysis stage. Three main questions guided this study:

- What are the values, beliefs, and assumptions in the publicly funded local school boards and local secondary schools surrounding Aboriginal Elders as professional resources?
- What are the perceived barriers of policies and politics that affect policy intervention to encourage recognition of Aboriginal Elders as professional resources?
- How might Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded secondary school classroom impact Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes?

Key terms used such as ethical space, Aboriginal, Indigenous, Haudenosaunee, Elders, Knowledge Holders, First Nations, Indigenous, the Great Law of Peace, and the Two Row Wampum Belt, are found in Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

The Importance of the Study

Aboriginal requests and suggestions to improve academic success for their students were not new. Neither was the cycle of rejection that includes acceptance, silence, and complications. This study accentuated the issues in placing Aboriginal Elders in the provincially funded classroom and revealed an ongoing cycle of rejection.

A study of statements by the Ontario College of Teachers (2006) recognized Aboriginal knowledge sets and the need to accommodate them. The teachers indicated acceptance of Aboriginal contributions as a recommendation that there was a need for "programs of teacher training for Elders…to enable them to participate more effectively

in school programs to improve knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture among students" (p. 35). There appeared to be a period of silence. Youngblood Henderson (2009) revealed the disjunctive gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge sets. In 2010 the teachers raised the issue on "whether knowledge, life experiences and the prior learning of First Nations individuals, particularly Elders could be recognized for certification purposes" (OCT, 2010, p. 9). Without supportive legislation, Aboriginal requests for their Elders to be in the classroom were denied.

Youngblood Henderson (2009) offered the stark realities of the rejection of Aboriginal offerings for professional education and suggested that development for standards of practice for Aboriginal Elder placement in the publicly funded classroom was needed. He provided an overview of the situation of Aboriginal Elders within systemic strategies "to bridge the gap between knowledge systems" (p. 62). He stated that while Elders "do not reject participation in Canadian education" they were concerned about "the current state of professional education and their involvement with the development of standards for practice," and the lack of respect for Indigenous knowledge: Their qualifications were not recognized by institutions; they were bound by the institution's schedules and time period; the programs were underfunded; and their compensation was not comparable to compensation of other teachers and professionals. These circumstances sent a clear message that their knowledge and expertise were undervalued (p. 62).

The Elders in Youngblood Henderson's (2009) study were aware of the objectivities of the educational system institution. The colonial education institution neglected to accommodate Aboriginal Elder contributions through a fair and equitable

system. Youngblood Henderson (2009) underscored the perimeters of the education system from which the Elders had an understanding that they were not recognized and valued for their contributions due to current systemic requirements that were ignorant of terms for their accommodation into the system such as:

- Qualifications
- Inflexibility
- Limited distribution of funds
- Lack of a policy for distribution of funds for compensation of services

I endeavoured to discover whether a local school would champion the request to place an Aboriginal Elder in one of their classrooms.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

I am well-informed about the history of Residential Schools. I listened to the memories of those who attended various schools and watched how Aboriginal families acted out the intergenerational stories that shaped their current relationships amongst Aboriginal peoples, schools, and their teachers but without family and community Aboriginal Elders. Those stories included the families of my parents, the brothers, sisters, and children, my elderly friends and mentors. It was not the intent of this study to revisit the history of relationships between the original peoples and settlers. The intent was to highlight and focus on particular understandings of how rights, politics, and policies, as acts of oppression and obstacles, were implemented. Those acts were enacted as traumatic activity to forfeit solutions for inclusion of Aboriginal Elders as supports for Aboriginal student academic success within the provincial public education system. The First Nations federal education system has its own troubling synchronicities. It is a study

of its own and is not included. However, First Nations peoples are attending publicly funded schools.

This study was grounded on the cultural imperatives of need for Aboriginal student success. It explored possible outcomes within the scope and limitations of the following:

- This was not a study of difference but rather one that explored what could be done to ameliorate academic and social needs across the cultural divide in publicly funded secondary school classrooms. It examined the conditions for placement of Aboriginal Elders in a publicly funded secondary school classroom.
- This study explored the barriers to placing Aboriginal Elders in publicly funded secondary school classrooms. It was not a study to accentuate seamless transitions such as from JK/SK – Grade 12, although indications were that Aboriginal Elders could offer advice and solutions on that topic.
- The studied process was not generalizable to other geographic locations or school boards. For purposes of confidentiality, the boundaries of the school boards were not described for this study.
- It was not the intent of this study to suggest the disruption of the current system of certifying teachers, but to problematize positions for Aboriginal Elders as professional resources in publicly funded school settings.

Organization of the Study

I offered my personal story of events that establish the sense of place where Aboriginal Elders are central figures in their traditional community. I presented

Indigenous cross-cultural research as a collective story. Although the focus of this story was grounded in the realities of the Ojibwa people of the targeted geographic locale, I drew on my collection of stories to examine continuums of relationships amongst my two birth cultures, Ojibwa and *Ongwehonwe,* thereby confirming the underpinnings of discontent preventing Aboriginal student academic success within publicly funded classrooms. Chapter Two describes the theories regarding relationships across cultures and gathering stories as data. Chapters Three and Four review the literature that situates the story of First Nations Elders and Settler's cross-cultural relationships within systems of education. The object of this discussion is to define the context of ethical space through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt and its importance in the context of this study as the rights, policies, and politics enforced upon First Peoples. Chapter Five discusses the method chosen for the study. Chapter Six presents the results of the study through my personal journal and interviews. Chapter Seven offers analytical conclusions to the placement of Elders in publicly funded secondary school classrooms and suggested recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORIZING CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

At the heart of requests for Aboriginal Elders was the desire for knowledge. Indigenous Knowledge is a benefit and acknowledged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; 2010). It indicated Indigenous knowledge as a specific environment that was coupled with needs for evolving and extending relationships between humans, the land, and other living entities. The definition offered further understanding that Indigenous knowledge embodied a high order of thinking skills for innovation and willingness to be flexible in order to adapt to changes. There was a transparent understanding that it would take a lifetime for an individual to know the local knowledge of a people as passed down from one generation to another. Youngblood Henderson (2000) gave this reminder that "Learning another worldview is a lifetime project that requires time and patience" (p. 261). Indigenous knowledge was associated with that stage of being an Elder with an accumulation of experiences and the responsibilities for sharing past knowledge. This was clearly the case with Cayuga Elder Jake Thomas recording of *the Great Law* and the anticipated 15-year span of activity to have it translated into English. Perhaps then, the knowledge required to understand the relational concepts of the Two Row Wampum Belt will become the motivational policy to meet and negotiate at the cultural divide. Solutions put forward by Aboriginal peoples, such as promoting Aboriginal Elders as professional resources in the classroom to work alongside teachers, needs to be addressed.

Through policy, the Canadian government attempted to disrupt Indigenous knowledge by separating children from their elderly teachers. The purpose was to encourage the assimilation project that would erase Aboriginal identity and government

adherence to treaties such as the provision of education. By telling story, the threads of knowledge were continuously reconnecting through clan and tribal affiliations, gatherings, and legal protections (Battiste & Youngblood-Henderson, 2000).

It was the understandings of two cultural solidarities concerned with their interpretations of power for place that was the source of contestations. The Two Row Wampum Belt was evidence of an ongoing dilemma of relations between two solitudes since 1613 (Alfred, 1999; Bedard, 1989). Yet, Aboriginal peoples were continuously forced to seek opportunities to negotiate policy for the education of their children at the cultural divide. The issues at stake were their inherent rights as sovereign peoples, and their knowledge of their lands (Assembly of First Nations, 2005; Chiefs of Ontario, 2005; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972; Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The Two Row Wampum was not an historical piece. It could not be described in a sentence or as a reference to a locked place in time. The Two Row Wampum Belt was a symbolic reference to colonialism as a theory of relationships between two solitudes that is as relevant in 2013 as it was in 1613.

Ethical Space: The Undercurrents of Space and Place

Perhaps the best theoretical framework for discussions about knowledge in education and cross-cultural relationships is ethical space. Poole's (1972) determination of ethical space as a theoretical framework referenced contentions across cultures as objectivities and subjectivities and their individual intentions: "There are two sorts of space because there are two sorts of intentions. The intentions structure the space in two different ways" (p. 6). Poole (1972) then explains that "when the two sets of intentions . . . confront each other . . . then ethical space is set up instantaneously" (p. 6). The term

ethical space and its association with success in education across cultures are expressed as moral obligations to provide support in the public school systems. The Ontario Native Education Counsellors Association (ONECA; 2010) argued for cultural supports such as counsellors and access to technology.

> Ethical spaces that are devoted to Aboriginal students with at least one full time Native Education Counsellor present for JK – Grade 8 and full time Native Education Counsellors in an appropriate ethical space that has a student services component, and "technology access for students" (Greenall & Loizides, 2001). . . . Ethical space is recognized as a positive retention practice. (p. 20)

Within ONECA's document, ethical space was expressed as a practice where support services were available. The bridge between learning from a colonial institutional system and a cultural lifelong, intergenerational perspective, such as from Aboriginal Elders, was addressed.

Ermine (2000, 2004, 2007), a Cree scholar, indicated relationship building was an integral component in Poole's (1972) ethical space. Poole's (1972) theory implies institutionally derived undercurrents at the cultural divide, and subjectivities that must be brought to the surface and acknowledged. Once this occurs, a process of reconciliation can begin. It is not a difficult concept but in its application as a theoretical base from which to conduct research, there are implications about defining sets of words across cultures. Poole (1972) proposed that outcomes of work conducted in ethical space would be a creation of new knowledge not previously known which then expected an alignment of focus and activity for development of concrete arguments and concepts that would adequately convey new meanings.

Bhabha's (2003) work added a layer of knowing that separated what was said by an individual and the collective, as classification of rights that were expressed or not:

> Freedom of expression is an individual right; the right to narrate, if you will permit me poetic license, is an enunciative right rather than an expressive right – the dialogic, communal or group right to address and be addressed, to signify and be interpreted, to speak and be heard, to make a sign and to know that it will receive respectful attention. (p. 34)

Bhabha's observation was reminiscent of cultural etiquette that was not practiced across cultures but rather ignored as an act of superiority.

Ermine (2000, 2004, 2007) spoke of ethical space in research, health, and law. His work demonstrated how the cultural understanding, language, intents, and perspectives enrich research across cultures. Ermine's (2000, 2004, 2007) works demonstrated how one's personal place in research was important in Indigenous cross-cultural research. In an examination of his family Cree language, he invited narratives where the language became an important aspect in describing relational activities at the cultural divide. He used his Cree language to demonstrate concepts of ethical space. In his Cree language, he explained the different layers of health. He then translated that back in those meetings where both cultures were prepared to address the cultural divide to understand Indigenous knowledge. His work demonstrated an important step at the local level of a geographical location. It was anticipated his work would become a global work template for cultures that can express their cultural language and interpret the cultural nuances into English.

I reviewed the institutional culture of education as a vehicle with its own worldview. Aboriginal knowledge was an alternate worldview and Aboriginal Elders as

the Knowledge Holders were the Aboriginal institution (Ermine, 2007). My research was a collective story that advocated for reconciliation of both worldviews in education to acknowledge Aboriginal education with its own pedagogy and curriculum. I anticipated that curriculum developed in ethical space would be useful for both worlds, all while keeping with the original agreements for relationship building communicated through the Two Row Wampum Belt as it was understood from community recognized Aboriginal Elders (Knowledge Holders).

But, Poole (1972) suggested that there needed to be a mediator to field concerns; that the mediator was aware of both cultures. This is where I understood the role of the Indigenous researcher to work in placing themselves in their own story (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Chase, 2005; Koch, 1998; Kovach, 2009). The Indigenous researcher in education needed to become informed about the cross-cultural issues of needs, intents, and perspectives. Kenny (2004) offered clear reasons of the need for Aboriginal researchers:

- Because the people tend to be more comfortable with Aboriginal researchers who usually have both the cultural and academic research background (p. 13);
- Accepts the facts of historical oppression from the onset, without the need to justify the historical context (p. 17);
- In the policy making area, the researcher is enabled to "get on with the business of making recommendations for policy design and implementation without the burden of repeating the unfortunate history yet one more time as a background to justify the study." (p. 17)

I turned to my ancestral story to understand the position of cross-cultural relationships in education with the intents of the Two Row Wampum Belt. I was conscious of my responsibilities as an Indigenous cross-cultural researcher, and my knowledge of the Aboriginal stages of life. I appreciated and respected that metaphysical space where participants in education from both the Settler culture and Aboriginal culture might volunteer their words to express their values, beliefs, and assumptions about each other's concepts and dreams in institutional education. Sharing knowledge might be a dangerous place in the cross-cultural relationship as Mason (2008) tells a story when Aboriginal Elders at the local level were involved in a project that took away their place as Knowledge Holders. Mason tells the story with a solution that would keep Aboriginal Elders involved in education.

Mason's (2008) Philosophy for Revolutionary Legitimation

Mason (2008) told a story of an end process that began when local Elders participated in the design of a mainstream Social Studies course. Their efforts contributed to a locally developed focus on First Nations living in the province of British Columbia where the course was taught (p. 134). Activities included field trips, guest speakers, and hands on experiential learning techniques that included arts and crafts. The redesign of the course was initiated due to several problems such as low enrolment, lack of resources, lack of expertise to teach a course perceived as inferior and intended only for First Nations students who were perceived as not smart enough to take other social studies courses (p. 135). It was an elective course without a university entrance credit.

The course redesign began with lobbying the Ministry of Education for an official provincial curriculum. A team of teachers from around the province worked on the new

curriculum with learning outcomes. This was sent to other educators and First Nations communities for their approval. It was designed as an option to meet the Grade 12 humanities elective requirement for graduation (Mason, 2008, p. 135). The course was further refined to become an examinable course to account for 20% of a student's final mark. Educators, First Nations communities, and the First Nations political organization lobbied together in support for the reorganization of the course.

The Ministry revised the course so that its structure matched the Socials 11 and Civics Studies 11 structure. Another team of cooperating teachers further revised the learning outcomes and the Ministry contracted a team of writers to develop a textbook. A draft of the text was then sent for a review to stakeholders in the Indigenous community. At this stage the First Nations Elders were considered to be the holders of wisdom (Mason, 2008, p. 136).

In 1999, the Ministry negotiated with universities to give the course status as a Grade 11 Canadian History course. The locally designed course became a standardized course with a textbook so that the history and culture of all First Nations in British Columbia were addressed. The textbook provided the detail so that a teacher was enabled to teach the prescribed learning outcomes (PLO) as approved by the Ministry. The emphasis was changed to political history with little content on local cultural knowledge.

The local course of study had many benefits but was no longer available in its original form (Mason, 2008). Local content was limited so that students would not be seen as advantaged over others (Mason, 2008, p. 137) and the high stakes testing did not focus on personal growth. Mason cites Brant-Castellano, Davis, and Lahache's (2000) statement that "provincially accredited curriculum and practices ensures that school

environments continue to emphasize ideas that reflect Western knowledge and belief systems" (p. 99).

Mason (2008) listed the advantages and disadvantages of the changed course of study as, exams lacked questions "around the spiritual and other dimensions" (p. 137), and changes in course delivery initiated less storytelling and involvement of Elders as role models with supportive teachings. Teachers' time to work with Indigenous community members to incorporate local and cultural knowledge, and that included the choices of Aboriginal peoples for experiential learning and personal growth, was reduced. Perhaps the most negative of concerns revolved around the relationships amongst Knowledge Holders and teachers: Indigenous voices were silenced. The relationships as understood by Indigenous peoples were disconnected and the objective voice of Western academics told a colonized story of First Nations people (Mason, 2008, p. 144). The course was adapted to Western ways of knowing and teaching. However, more people were educated about the history of First Nations.

The course changes were appropriated as legitimized reform in order to reach a wider audience and establish a formal credit, but the knowledge of the local Elders had less emphasis. Mason (2008) suggested a revolutionary legitimation to decolonize education, so that, knowledge and evaluation of knowledge would be viewed differently by students, academics, and education professionals. Her plan required a disruption of the structures and norms of the educational system as a whole so that Indigenous knowledge would be brought from the margins to the centre on equal ground with Western ways of knowing, learning, and teaching (p. 144).

Mason (2008) advocated for systemic changes in values and promoted education as the practice of freedom (p. 149-150) through Indigenous voice and pedagogy. The aim to promote Aboriginal knowledge as at parity with Western academia would challenge the colonizers' control of what counts as knowledge and that challenge would include the norms about curriculum design, teaching, and assessment. The further challenge would be to accommodate space for non-Western ways of knowing and being (p. 148) and that educators would be required to engage in transformations to decolonize teaching and incorporate experiential, student centered, and place based learning.

Mason's (2008) perspective for an alternate solution that would incorporate a legitimated revolution, rather than a colonial path for reform, is evidence of need for relationships according to the Two Row Wampum Belt, and, as implied through Poole's (1972) theory of ethical space. Negotiated solutions with Aboriginal peoples, such as the placement of Aboriginal Elders in classrooms, are needed. Interpretation and application of institutional policies would not be left unchallenged in Mason's proposal.

Coburn's (2005) Theory: The Non-Aboriginal Perspective

Coburn's (2005) study suggested that the quantity of policy messages and the subsequent interpretations of policy messages had an impact on teacher practices in the classroom. Coburn interpreted this as the Formal Policy System (FPS). She discovered "how teachers in two California elementary schools learned about and responded to changes in state reading policy…the nature of their connections to policy messages" (p. 23). Her study revealed that there was a correlation in discourse between the FPS and the application of policy initiatives in the public school classroom (C). Coburn's study did not factor in relationships with cultural groups of nonsystem actors, such as Aboriginal

Elders, Aboriginal parents, and Aboriginal consultants, in interpreting policy. Her study indicated student success (SS) was dependent on the outcomes of classroom applications, which, in turn, were influenced by how policy was interpreted. She determined that the relationship between teacher and interpreter added another layer of interpretation when policy was discussed with a supervisor, administrator or member of a professional organization. I presented Aboriginal student success (SS) as dependent on specific outcomes of classroom applications and as influenced by the relationship between an Aboriginal Elder and a classroom teacher.

Coburn's (2005) study of policy systems might be seen as a relational coded formula SS = PPP / C + R. The translated codes are *SS (Student Success) = PPP (Policy promoting + Professional organization + Professional development) in relation to C (Classroom practice); and R (Relationships with nonsystem actors)*. I used Coburn's theory as a formula but it is not a mathematical application but rather a demonstration of relationships amongst system and nonsystem actors and policy.

Coburn's (2005) study offered clues on how policy discourse influences teacher practice in the classroom and ultimately the delivery of teacher strategies for student success. Coburn's theory suggested that teacher classroom practice and relationships with nonsystem actors or those not recognized by the system as administrators, were further influenced by policy promotions and influence of messages received from professional organizations and through professional development.

There was evidence that transformations in the classroom can occur when teachers have encouragement and support. Kanu (2005) studied the effects of *Teacher Perceptions of the Integration of Aboriginal Culture into the High School Curriculum*

through an ethnographic study conducted among 10 teachers from three publicly funded high schools. The outcomes of that study led to 10 recommendations "to guide policy and practice in the integration of Aboriginal perspectives" (p. 65). An understanding of Coburn's (2005) work and Kanu's approach offers insights on how this study needs to be framed to gather data. Thus, a study that is framed to capture messages that include the words of Aboriginal Elders in an environment of ethical space for professional learning might add to the discourse of policy and classroom outcomes to benefit both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Decolonizing Education From Tokenism to Dreaming

Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith (2008) advised that Indigenous peoples are "framing" their life worlds for "decolonization" (p.10). "Decolonisation is demystifying and defining Aboriginality is a new concept. There is a notion of universal 'assumed knowledge' in our culture, which means there is no necessity to describe" (Heiss, 2003, p. 34). Laenui (2000) speaks about "rediscovering" one's history and recovering one's culture, language, identity, and so on, as fundamental to the movement for decolonization. Brayboy (2005) advocates for telling of Aboriginal story to critically trace the history of colonization.

The quandary of education as a decolonization force did not belong only to Indigenous peoples in Canada, but generally all over the world. The plight of Indigenous peoples is encapsulated at the global level through the work of the United Nations in North America (United Nations, 2007a, 2007b). The United States historically offered the design for federal policy initiatives (Brady, 1995) that still exists today and Canada followed its formula for assimilation of Aboriginal peoples living in Canada. The work of

colonization in the education of Aboriginal peoples had negative outcomes. Aboriginal peoples were identified, generally, as lacking adequate academic qualifications to participate equally in the labour force market (CME, 2008; OME, 2007b). The inclusion and accommodation of Aboriginal Elders in the classroom could be a tangible response to a distanced, intergenerational layer of ethical space at the local school level by teachers and administrators seeking to decolonize and close achievement gaps. Laenui (2000) described colonization and decolonization as social processes and exposed a particular stage of colonization as what was left after survival:

> Whatever remnants of culture that have survived the onslaught of the earlier steps are given surface accommodation. They are tolerated as an exhibition of the colonial regime's sense of leniency to the continuing ignorance of the Natives. The practices are called folkloric: "showing respect to the old folks and to tradition". They are given token regard. (p. 151)

Laenui (2000) claimed colonized society tended to relegate the original owners of land to the margins of society in order to ignore their existence and in that process exhume native culture as an exotic and declining entity rather than as a culture with learned social processes of etiquette in the learning process. Further Indigenous peoples had an extensive system for retaining language that should be acknowledged rather than given superficial credit. Such token regard included discussions on "issues regarding compensation for elder's expertise" (Hulan & Eigenbrod, 2008, p. 10), and identifying knowledge to cross social boundaries and offer translation services as unique rather than as an honorarium policy for the compensation of esteemed academics.

Margins were imposed, continuously, when issues of compensation did not include discussions of equity such as found in a handbook developed by the council on Aboriginal initiatives at the University of Alberta (U of A). At U of A, an Advisory Committee on Elders, Protocol, and Teachings (ACEPT) was developed by "cultural brokers" who acted between the Aboriginal community and the university community (Council on Aboriginal Initiatives, 2012, p. 12). This group provided printed text as a format to advise the university on the Elder protocol and guidelines of their "Kehteyak" (meaning "the old ones" in Cree) (p. 5). The scope of the "policy and its procedures applied to all faculty and staff who utilized the experiences and knowledge of Elders, on- or off-campus for University of Alberta purposes" (p. 12). The Council on Aboriginal Initiatives did not define who was or was not an Elder. At the outset it explained "the term elder was an attempt to translate the meaning of 'kehteyak' from Indigenous languages to the English language" as "Elders are recognized and identified by their respective communities according to the service they provide" (p. 9). The Council defined protocols as the means of protecting Aboriginal Elders as "An Elder or "old one" who never set a fee or asked for gifts (p. 11). It employed the "reciprocity principle – Aboriginal people taking care of each other – is what is important." (p. 12). An Elder might have an assistant, or helper known as an "oskapew" (Elder apprentice) who must also be "fairly compensated" (p. 12). The handbook advised someone be found who was able to "look after an Elder, and whose duties may include arranging transportation to and from the venue, greeting and introducing the Elder, and offering the comforts that Elderly people may require (e.g., bathroom, quiet resting place, food, and drink)" (p. 13).

Looking after an Elder might also include providing transportation and giving a blanket in addition to honorariums for delivering certain ceremonies.

McNally (2009) referenced Aboriginal Elders as "similar to the king in medieval European societies" (p. 2) and as adjacent to "the priest, the prophet" (p. 3). His study indicated ultimate appreciation of "the authority of Elders to the health and sustainability of communities" (p. 3). It was unknown to what extent the publicly funded schools in this geographic location would accommodate Aboriginal Elders within their school board classrooms.

The Settler curriculum was structured to direct teachers to the written texts and this is a problem. Kulchyski et al. (1999/2003) stated that students of today are "accustomed" to the "pre-packaged forms" of learning (p. xv). These indicated texts were rebuked as a commodity of a materialistic society. The oral knowledge written in text is "a new manner – so it will also be 'read' in a new manner" (p. xv). They stressed that deep learning would be lost: "The limitations of the text are largely related to the degree of depth one can reach in learning directly, organically and authentically from an Elder. The desirable duration of the learning environment might be a period of several years" (p. xiv). Written text could not establish student relationships with one elder before being directed to another. Knowledge shared by Elders was considered a gift and shared through an understanding of protocols and processes, of giving and taking and through a method of assessment that required "listening, observing, and waiting in an attitude of respect" (p. xv).

Under the tutelage of Elders, the student was directed to hone intuitive skills and humour as a part of learning. The moral lessons were designed to guide a good mind that

was also linked with behavioural attributes and spiritual connection for living a good life with all relations. It was questioned as to what avenues could be designed so that Aboriginal peoples were recognized as resources with beneficial status within provincial public school boards and schools as nonsystem actors, as investing stakeholders, rather than as captured employees of the system, or as interesting and amusing storytellers and crafts persons, or as inscrutable additions in cultural studies?

Laenui (2000) and Haig-Brown and Danneman (2002) offered hope in dreaming by the oppressed as a necessary step in the decolonization process, along with reflection and introspection, which required "time and effort in the development of a new social order" (Laenui, 2000, p. 156). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b) education policy framework for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples was an opportunity for those who were dreaming a new social order for better education. A ground up perspective determined that it was in the classroom where teacher practice determined student academic success (Coburn, 2005; Kanu, 2005). In that dreaming, the realities of funding conundrums for the education of Aboriginal students needed to be addressed.

In the publicly funded education of Aboriginal students, academic success was a puzzle consisting of provincial and national policy. The students who were funded with federal dollars were under a different funding umbrella. They attended publicly funded schools while living in their First Nations community. Other First Nations students who lived off reserve were under the provincial mandates along with the Settler population. Aboriginal Elder participation, their associated knowledge, and their relationship with teachers in the classroom were associated as a determinant for Aboriginal student success and a sign of a decolonizing practice. It was not known whether or not interpretations of

the present history offered by Aboriginal Elders might be different for on and off-reserve experiences.

As I examined the myriad of theories, I saw attempts to imprison knowledge. Perhaps this occurred due to my Indigenous critical lens. I am an Indigenous person who has had to process and mitigate the daily assaults of policies and politics against my Indigenous rights. I challenged my aspirations to live outside the margins of colonial ignorance. I determined to be out of the microscope of colonial curiosity and be examining the intricacies of a cross-cultural relationship. My knowledge base was about living the values of tolerance, respect, truth, harmony, and prayers for positive relationships. Such knowledge transcended the physical world to embrace all living and nonliving worlds and included cosmic entities. I embraced knowledge within Indigenous stories as they held messages for living, relationship building, and projecting actions for continuous good living for future generations. Indigenous knowledge embraced lifelong learning that endured to that stage of becoming an Elder. This was my understanding of "for the common good." I agree with Sinclair (2004) and other authors that: " The kinship web is physical, spatial, and temporal (Deloria, 1999; Henderson, 2000; Kulchyski, 1999/2003; McCaskill & Newhouse, 1999), all species, all forms of life, have equal status before the presence of the universal power to which all are subject" (p. 55). My understanding did not imply a revival of the past but rather a revival of the knowledge on how to think and act within co-existing relationships as a decolonizing act. Denzin et al. (2008) offered this picture of decolonizing theory:

> Critical indigenous, decolonizing theory articulates ontology based on historical realism and epistemology that is transactional and a methodology that is

> performative, dialectical. It values ethical systems embedded in indigenous values. It transfers control to the indigenous community. It uses spiritual models of truth and validity…Such work should be owned by, and done for, indigenous persons. It should be evaluated in terms of indigenous, not Western, epistemological and political criteria. It should avoid simplistic dichotomies and either or binaries. It should foreground indigenous narratives and traditions. It should showcase the many ways in which indigenous and critical postcolonial scholars are a part of a "cacophony of subaltern voices." So conceived, decolonizing methodologies embody "activist agendas working towards social justice, sovereignty, self-determination, and emancipatory goals. (p. 22-23)

Decolonizing pursuits were taking many avenues and Indigenous peoples needed to take charge of their own destiny and freedom to express changes to meet their needs. Imprisoning knowledge for the will of a marketable enterprise had been the work of anthropologists, researchers, and developers of education. Without the ongoing involvement of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous oral knowledge was transformed to suit the abilities of the colonial settler masses to accept bits and pieces or as fitted and boxed into a line or two of text. Indigenous knowledge became a marketable item with a monetary value, and college and universities opened new programs to better accommodate Indigenous peoples with promises of support. However, positions with authority and evaluation in local school boards and local schools were not opened to those Aboriginal Knowledge Holders who were best able to critique the skills of the classroom teacher for improvement of their practices to engage Aboriginal students for their academic success.

I saw the potential for decolonization in the publicly funded education system. I was guided by the theory for co-existence that was ingrained in the story of the Two Row Wampum Belt (Bedard, 1989; Longboat, 2008b). History and Aboriginal story demonstrated how each successive government in North America ignored the offer to learn, understand, and practice peaceful co-existence. The story of the Two Row Wampum Belt and the Seven Fires story would prove useful for inviting dialogue at the cultural divide. The Two Row Wampum Belt was simple in its design but it held a multitude of relational understandings for peaceful co-existence on the land. Within its references, there was the call to understand the objectivities and subjectivities in ethical space. It was with the understandings of the Two Row Wampum Belt that I expected to conduct decolonizing research with a cross-cultural focus.

Cross-cultural research was an opportunity for two cultures to meet at the cultural divide. It was an invitation to voice what was known and not known: to soften the boundary lines of misunderstandings and find ways to negotiate meanings and understandings for the co-creation of new knowledge and language. It was anticipated that through new language (Ermine, 2000), abstract expectations would became concrete applications that would benefit both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Keller, Hall, Bannister, and Lydon (2006) acknowledged research as relational: "Aboriginal scholars point to the importance of relationships and the acceptance of many ways of knowing as steps before thinking about 'research" (p. 9). "Aboriginal peoples were creating knowledge since time began" (p. 10) and "They have evolved systematic approaches for the creation of knowledge needed to survive and prosper" (p. 12). Keller et al. (2006) stated that approaches to knowledge making were different from one culture

to another and the reported results differed in terms of "clear language and immediacy" (p. 10).

I considered that geographic locales held specific information. The choice of locales would reveal cultural knowledge specific to their local realities. I suspected that too many differing cultures located in classrooms might be a concern. I chose a location where the majority of First Nations were Ojibwa. My strategy was to advance a design that would be limited to a geographic locale and not be complicated with tribal populations with differing perspectives.

Tribal Critical Theory

Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Theory (Tribal Crit) holds specific understandings about how to interpret data within Aboriginal stories. The Indigenous perspective traces the festering source of complexity:

- colonization is endemic to society, not racism;
- racism is a manifestation of colonialism (Brayboy, 2005, p. 439).

Brayboy argued that stories held data and could be analyzed through a critical lens. Indigenous stories were theory because stories could be traced by their telling over many generations and critically observed as endogenous sensibilities modelled in the day-to-day living of Elders. Colonization was not part of Aboriginal society. Through story, it was possible to trace the entry of colonization and the ways it crept into the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Brayboy claimed that Indigenous stories were theory because stories were traced by their unchanged telling over many generations. Tribal Crit Theory was an explanatory theoretical lens through which to better describe the lived experiences of tribal peoples. The power of Tribal Crit was based on a series of traditions, ideas,

thoughts, and epistemologies that were grounded in tribal histories thousands of years old (p. 441). An example of story as a Tribal Crit Theory best suited for study was the description of the geographical landmass of North America as Turtle Island and the story of creation that began on the back of a turtle. How could Aboriginal peoples have conceived this physical attribution of the land they lived on except as knowledge and observations garnered through generations of oral story telling?

I considered the atrocities of schooling and the untold stories being gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I considered their statements:

- How can Canadians and Aboriginal peoples establish new relations with one another based on mutual understanding and respect?
- What does reconciliation mean to you? How will we know when reconciliation has taken place? (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, n.d., p. 12)

Stories about racism implicated there was a victim. I took to heart Oka civil leader Ellen Gabriel's statement:

> We should not identify ourselves as victims. We are not victims. We are Indigenous people of this land. We are of this land. And that was attacked by the church. It was condoned by the government of Canada…Racism is not acceptable. We cannot feed racism. (Ahooja, 2009)

A whole generation of Aboriginal peoples were robbed of their traditional roles. Colonial curriculum prepared them to be victims rather than as undefeated, sovereign peoples with rights to be educated in a manner to support their lifelong traditional process of preparation to become Aboriginal Elders with language and culture intact. That process

was negated when potential negotiation in ethical space was avoided. The intergenerational relationship with Aboriginal Elders was not transformed from the traditional Aboriginal community and into the Settler curriculum and classroom.

Summary

The study of ethical space allowed an incorporated approach for a criss-crossing of stories in cross-cultural research. Poole (1972) indicated qualitative approaches required subjective methods. He asserted that, "one of the major tasks of the subjective method is to establish rules for the collecting, arranging and comparison of ethical profiles" (p. 135). As a researcher, I questioned what profile did I see? What rules were in place, and did I recognize them? What were the subjectivities, the deep and festering discontent of Aboriginal peoples towards the education system?

Ethical space was an uncomfortable place to be as cultures met, particularly when a subjective culture was deemed a threat and was uninvited within the contextually derived cultural space of an institution. This was the current situation at the cultural divide in the local school board and local school curriculum. Without requesting a mediator, the two cultures would not confront their own realities or negotiate the terms for new knowledge. The education system, under its own history of policies, politics, and laws devised its powers to create its own objectivities under which their professions delivered its services.

CHAPTER THREE: ELDER LEADERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE IN EDUCATION AS ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CUSTOMARY PRACTICES

The causal factors affecting educational outcomes for Aboriginal students are complex and challenge existing power structures within education settings while certain political discourses and social inequalities denied Aboriginal capacity building in educational settings. Aboriginal peoples were concretely stating their desires to assert their rightful prerogatives in many forms such as documents, responses to government policies, research, conferences, workshops, seminars, sit-ins, and demonstrations. Researchers offered consistency in their written works to bring to the surface the causes for the undercurrents and Aboriginal resistances to the offerings of colonial society in the education of Aboriginal students. The messages and those of their allied peers were, however, systematically ignored.

Alfred (1999), Chrisjohn and Young (2006), Wotherspoon and Schissel (2003), and Wotherspoon and Schissel (2000) delivered interweaving stories of support for the government document *Royal Commission for Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP, 1996). The findings were related and interconnected to the education of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The RCAP document is the most recent government requested document of magnitude to cover Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Project was expected to offer more detail of the residential school experiences and impacts on the education of Aboriginal peoples. The attention paid to RCAP recommendations that Aboriginal Elders be placed in the classroom was negligible. There was a need for interpretations of current policies and critical policies that would support the rights of Aboriginal peoples for an education that would meet their needs.

Legal scholars such as Mathias and Yabsley (1986), Moss and Gardner-O'Toole, (1987/1991), Nahwegahbow (2012), and Peach (2011) defined and interpreted the imposition of the *Indian Act* over the lives of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. It was made clear there was a colonial history of oppression. Levine-Rasky (2000) and North (2008) deduced the motives for racism as opportunity for extending colonial privilege.

Brady (1995), Howlett (1994), and Woo (2003, 2011) traced the resistances to assimilative attempts as stages between Aboriginal peoples and government policy. The government recognized the sovereign rights of Aboriginal peoples to express their needs and intents for a quality education, by accepting the *Red Paper Policy on Indian Control of Education* (NIB, 1972) document. The most critical of documents was from the federal Office of the Auditor General (2005). That document revealed the limited success of the colonial school system to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples. There were countless authors who discussed the education of Aboriginal peoples and advocated for critical changes in pedagogical designs for the delivery of Aboriginal intended curriculum. These included Chrisjohn and Young (2006); Dion (2009), Faries (2009), Iseke-Barnes (2003, 2005), Kanu (2005), Kulnieks, Longboat, and Young (2010), Lafrance (2000), Levin (1995, 2001, 2009), and Miller (1996). The list of Aboriginal authors and their allies on such subjects was long.

The AFN (2005, 2009, 2012) contributed national updates and research concerning the education of First Nations students as well as the provincial Chiefs of Ontario (2005) and their New Agenda Working Group (2012). In Ontario, the story of attempts by Aboriginal peoples for the control of their education (MacLean, 2002; Smith, 1987), prior to the establishment of residential school curriculum was more apt to be

criticised than understood outside the paradigm of colonialism. The CME (2008) included Aboriginal Peoples in their lists of challenges and priorities but it lacked reference to these contributions of Aboriginal knowledge.

It was rare for authors to implicate a need for Aboriginal Elders to be in the publicly funded secondary school classroom. This oversight is problematic. Youngblood Henderson (2009) explicated the issues at the heart of this conundrum as a colonial institutional privilege to deny recognition of Aboriginal Elders as recognizable professionals. Kenny (2004) summarized the juxtaposed position of Aboriginal peoples to succeed in Euro-Western designed education: "Aboriginal peoples are asked to reject meaningful and critical aspects of their identities and sophisticated world views" (p. 8). Who was best educated to guide, mentor, and model what was all introspected in a worldview than the most experienced of Indigenous society? I dared to suggest our Aboriginal Elders.

Aboriginal scholars, such as Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000), Chrisjohn and Young (2006), Grande (2004), Miller (1996), and L. T. Smith (1999) documented colonial damage. They exposed missing data of Indigenous stories through removal of language and then shifts into the English language, removal of children from their families and communities, and institutional control over the schooling of Aboriginal children. These formidable acts were expressly manifested through government acts, legislation, and policies with the intent to eventually control the resources of land, water, and minerals. The forceful intervention approach to educate Aboriginal children clashed with the Aboriginal philosophy of noninterference. The education of Aboriginal peoples included Aboriginal Elders who had accumulated life experiences within the guidelines

of living a good life as understood through the Ojibwa story of *Seven Stages of Life* (Owl, 1989). The Settler notions of rights, policy, and political acts continued to interfere with Aboriginal power to address solutions for their educational needs. These disconnects of Aboriginal knowledge in the publicly funded school curriculum continues.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b) First Nation, Metís and Inuit Education Policy Framework was a sign of good intentions to ameliorate the harms of the past. There were gaps to be addressed such as the pedagogical approach to address Aboriginal student need in the publicly funded classroom. The Ministry's framework did not include pedagogical strategies that required a cultural design to be responsive and respectful of Aboriginal voice. Further, the design neglected to address Aboriginal student needs while sitting amongst their non-Aboriginal peers.

There were contrasting differences as to how provincial local school boards and local schools interpreted relationship building with Aboriginal peoples as a strategy for Aboriginal student success (OME, 2007b). In sovereign terms that indicated Aboriginal rights to an education to meet their needs, the belief was that it is a simple task to have Aboriginal Elders placed in publicly funded schools as a response to Aboriginal student requests (Longboat, 2008b; Ontario Minister's Student Advisory Council, 2009; RCAP, 1996).

Aboriginal written literature exposed a climate and environment of policy, power, and politics that intrudes into the Aboriginal traditional education system. The literature was sparse about Aboriginal Eldership as an authoritative career and about potential for the integration of Elders into the publicly funded school classroom, although there are projects that indicated desire for this step. Goulet et al. (2009) described the Elders in

Residence Program. Lafrance (2000) implicated Elder presence in the First Nation classroom and involvement in design and delivery of curriculum as establishing a sense of normalcy to learn. Graham and Ireland (2008) involved Elders in the *Power of Place* project in British Columbia. However, Mason (2008) provided a cautionary story about how the education system celebrated Aboriginal Elders as resources to create texts but ignored their oral voice as a medium for formal teaching.

If the publicly funded secondary school teachers were having difficulty in delivering curriculum for Aboriginal students' success, this also indicated distance as well as differences in relationships with Aboriginal peoples. I used the term distance rather than difference to suggest that the distance is about what is known as compared to what is not known. This chapter discloses what may not be known about Aboriginal requests for Aboriginal Elders to be integrated into the classroom.

Elders

Descriptions of Elders are extensive in the literature. The Indigenous community determined who best exemplified the model of an Elder (Cyr, n.d., 2009; McNally, 2009; Northern Ontario School of the Medicine's Aboriginal Affairs Unit, 2008; RCAP, 1996; Wilson, 1996). There was a difference in separating the senior Knowledge Holders with those who have attained recognition by Aboriginal families and community consensus as being wise. "There have been and are, old people who are not Elders with a capital E; but there are no Elders who are not also older, or who at least evidence the comportment and ways of knowing customary old age" (McNally, 2009, p. 23). An individual usually became a grandparent before the Aboriginal community recognized that individual as an Aboriginal Elder. In the terms of colonial ageism, that time was about being a senior and

eligible for certain benefits such as an old age pension, receiving discounts, or applying for a waiver of tuition in academic settings. McNally noted that differentiation between Elders did not occur until the late 20th century (p. 40). Contact with the newcomers brought many changes in the health, wealth, and social organization of not just the young adults and children, but also at the level of the senior and elder population. Fettes and Norton (2000), in their discussion of Aboriginal languages and public policy in Canada, quote the Assembly of First Nations (1990): "Elders are the cornerstone of traditional education, and therefore must be accorded proper and fitting consideration of their expertise" (p. 29).

Deference for materialism such as neo-colonial preferences for academic status and/or financial success did not fit into the Aboriginal definition of an Elder. Rather, Aboriginal Elders looked forward to addressing Aboriginal students who asked to reconnect with Elders and to the stories that form their cultural identity. The data produced by Rosenburg et al. (2009) offer evidence that Elders who had the capacity to teach with full knowledge of stories that connected the past and who had a land-based philosophy were members of a disregarded resource pool that was quickly declining with time. The words of Haig-Brown and Dannemann (2002) resonated through each generation: "To defer the work may be just the time it takes for one more Elder to pass on and one more knowledge keeper to find no one to take up the knowledge and put it to good use" (p. 466) Aboriginal Elders are keys to past stories to help students make sense of the present story.

Seven Stages of Life

The life story of Elders from the perspective of Anishnabe peoples was understood through the story line of the Seven Stages of Life. A full seven stages of life was thought of as one generation. It was not just one generation of wisdom that was learned within a person's lifetime. The general rule was that each individual would absorb the knowledge passed through seven generations, which contained the knowledge of the seven generations before that. Debbie Jette, Cree Elder expressed this well: "My grandparents taught me that to fully understand the importance of something you must look back seven generations and you must look forward seven generations" (Ball, n.d.). With permission, from Odawa Elder Liza Mosher, these seven stages were outlined (Owl, 1989)

- Stage One: The Good Life
- Stage Two: The Fast Life
- Stage Three: The Wandering and Wondering Life
- Stage Four: The Stages of Truth
- Stage Five: The Planting and Planning Life
- Stage Six: The Doing Life
- Stage Seven: The Elder, Giving Back Life. (p. 80-89)

These stages of life were conscious thresholds that reference the traditional life of Ojibwa people. I was informed that these stages lack a teenager life. Leichner (2011) explained how the term was a marketing scheme to direct specific sales and create new spending habits.

The Elders in a community are involved in the life of each child from birth onwards until the Elders pass on into the Spirit world (Aboriginal understanding of death). Traditional Ojibwa people understood the meaning of lifelong education and they strived to meet expectations to continue the good life even unto old age by being models and mentors. By the time a traditional Aboriginal child, who was raised with these concepts, entered the publicly funded school system, they could have been taught by many of their family, including Elders and community members. Those who were traditionally raised were expected to have an appreciation for living and for the life stages they would go through.

Those individuals who were not fortunate to have been cradled and guided in the first years within a good life had difficulty connecting with what that meant. These children were most likely living in families apart from Aboriginal community, grandparents, Elders and other relatives, extended family, etcetera. Many children were not living with their cultural families or the traditional teachings were lost to that family. For these children, there may have been many interruptions in their Aboriginal family due to distances from their Aboriginal community, families, and Elder relationships, the culture and language.

Places to Find Aboriginal Elders

Books were written to capture the words of Aboriginal Elders, descriptions of their roles, their lives, and cultural perspectives such as by Archibald (2008), Arden & Wall (1990) and Kulchyski, McCaskell, and Newhouse (1999/2003). Berger (2008) indicated Inuit perspectives of education curriculum and Bond (2004) assisted Australian Aborigine Elders to define their monitoring role in the education of their students as the

mob. Critical projects such as those described by Goulet et al. (2009), Janvier and Mohan (2003), McKay-Carriere and McKenzie (2009), and Sinclair (2004), implicated the places of Elders in the design of curriculum. Grant (1995) provided a critical examination of Aboriginal and colonial cultural approaches to old age. The Assembly of First Nations and Chiefs of Ontario welcome Elders as spiritual advisors and contributors of knowledge in their gatherings as do many Aboriginal assemblies.

Protocol

There were organizations, such as local school boards and local schools, colleges and universities, and health organizations that involved Aboriginal peoples. They had written protocols, guidelines, and references about Elders in their communities. Accessibility of Elders in higher education was reflected through Aboriginal student services programs and "in-residence" programs in universities such as McMaster University (n.d.), University of Winnipeg (n.d.), Lakehead University (2008), Trent University (2008), Queen's University (2002), and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's Aboriginal Affairs Unit (2008).

The natural trend was that the Aboriginal group(s) saw the need to set in writing how Aboriginal Elders were to be accommodated within their institutions, as demonstrated by the Council on Aboriginal Initiatives (2012) in Alberta, and the Regina Public School Division Elders in Residence Program and Elders Council and the Trustees (as cited in Goulet et al., 2009). There were general similarities of competency content and the documents were written within the geographical context of the Aboriginal cultural Elder group, with tribal group identities such as Cree, Ojibwa, Mohawk, Cayuga, and others. There was concern that Aboriginal students attended to their educational

needs as provided through Euro-Western institutions while maintaining their identity and cultural knowledge (RCAP, 1996). The issue was to have the students learn within a cross-cultural atmosphere that recognized and affirmed Aboriginal "transitional knowledge and its' methods of transmission." These concerns were documented. The RCAP's (1996) report affirmed that:

> Elders expressed deep concern to [RCAP] Commissioners about the current state of education. While they do not reject participation in Canadian education, they question the exclusion of traditional knowledge and its methods of transmission. They see that young people and adults emerge from school with a confused sense of Aboriginal identity and without the basic cultural knowledge to participate fully in the traditions of their society. (v3, c5, s7, p. 489)

There were an impressive number of sources from which to draw arguments of need for Elder involvement in the education of Aboriginal students. Brascoupé and Waters (2009) argued for the inclusion of Aboriginal Elders as leaders for cultural safety: "bringing together the people involved in a dispute or harmful incident to talk, listen and learn from each other and to agree on a solution" (p. 25); and, as being symbols of cultural wealth such as traditional "knowledge, history, and healing practices. From an Aboriginal perspective the evidence for cultural safety is imbedded in traditional knowledge, teachings and values of Elders and healers" (p. 28).

Evidence was lacking, however, for demonstrations of success when Aboriginal students were in the publicly funded school classroom where an Aboriginal Elder was present. Sinclair (2004) advised that Aboriginal students succeeded best when the pedagogy was delivered from the perspective of Aboriginal knowledge rather than as a

cross-cultural initiative. Although the perspective was about social work education, the arguments addressed the need for transformation of teaching skills. She stated there were "risks that result from an assumption that current cross-cultural and anti-oppressive approaches are an effective lens through which to regard hundreds of years of oppression and cultural destruction" (p. 49). She defines her position as: "A decolonizing pedagogy is a contemporary cultural imperative; that culturally appropriate and sociologically relevant teaching and healing models must evolve and translate into practice and service delivery that will meet the needs of future generations" (p. 49). The impression provided was that Aboriginal Elders were capable of overseeing the quality of training for their Aboriginal community members to ensure that each student had knowledge of their history and epistemology without the background of colonial perplexity. This could not occur in a cross-cultural classroom. "Culturally relevant pedagogy incorporates perspectives and practices respectful to the group in question and attends to those issues that impact most on Aboriginal people [Weaver, 1999]. Those issues are history and epistemology" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 53). Sinclair's article defined pedagogical outcomes so that the learner moved towards new awareness of relations of power and changing the world as:

- Aboriginal personal and familial contexts and kinship webs
- Aboriginal socio-political contexts
- Knowledge reconstruction centers on the relationship between Indigenous epistemology and ecological survival

To achieve these outcomes the educator had to have specific competencies. He or she:

> Must act as a role model who is expected to challenge stereotypes, address issues of oppression and internalized colonization, reclaim and contextualize Aboriginal history, acquire western theoretical and practice knowledge, engage in the reconstruction of Aboriginal epistemology and pedagogical forms, and synthesize these tasks into a form that meets the mandate of the *Elders*, the requirements of western institutions and regulatory bodies, and needs of students. (Sinclair, 2004, p. 57)

The indication here is that Aboriginal Elders had a mandate that aligned with RCAP (1996). The assumption was the educator understood the tri-part relationship that included Aboriginal Elders.

In some university settings, Aboriginal Elders were not subjected to the need to apply to the Ontario College of Teachers for a Certificate of Qualification and Registration, which is a license to teach in Ontario (see Durham EFTO, 2011 and OCT, 2013) because an Ontario teaching certificate was not always a requirement at the postsecondary level. Aboriginal Elders were known to lead classes or act as guest speakers. While Aboriginal adults were successfully completing their postsecondary studies with Aboriginal supports, the elementary and secondary schools were not offering consistent and daily supports and were lacking in progress to match services that allowed Aboriginal student success alongside their non-Aboriginal peers. The balance of this section related experiences with Elders in their language, how they were perceived by Western culture, and their place in the context of history as told through story.

The Language of the Ojibwa Elders

I was fortunate to have been in the presence of many Elder members of Ojibwa communities who were in their 80s and 90s. I heard how the language was spoken in their younger years with their grandparents. I remember the first time I was called Dimooyenh by my newly found northern Ojibwa friends. I was barely in my 20s then. When I asked what that meant, I was told with great seriousness it meant "old woman." At first I was insulted. I wore long skirts and because of my tendency to have earaches, I wore a light colourful scarf, as well, stockings or nylons every day, and I carried a sweater more out of habit than need. But, as I later discovered, I was talked about for more than my appearance.

I was raised to be self-sufficient, respectful, and industrious. I was taught how to grow a garden and preserve its bounties, and I gathered the medicines that would be needed at any time of the year with the reverence expected under *the Great Law* and addressed with Thanksgiving. I was not brought up in the practice of running to a doctor but was trained to recognize the signs when to apply certain gathered medicines. Further, I spent time in conversations while sipping tea with the older members of the community and offering my assistance. The term Dimooyenh was a sign of recognition of the set of knowledge I had, but I was still young. The full word is mindimooyenh. Another time I was told I was fat. By the time I heard this, I understood that it was not meant to define my physical appearance but that I was admired.

I rarely hear the term gichi anishnaabe amongst the older population today. I related that term with how the old ones greeted one another. McNally (2009) spoke of the word gichi anishnabe as a stage of moral attainment and a time of becoming most human

and in tune with "other than human helper"' on the path of "mino-bimaadziwin" (good life) (p. 25). I came to know these older people as Elders. I learned that differences in stages of age required respectful approaches. The older generation of Aboriginal grandparents commented on how the younger Aboriginal generation rarely exhibited the required appreciative behaviours for learning (personal casual conversations with grandparents).

Aging as a Career

There was a marked difference between the Aboriginal cultural perspectives and that of colonial practices. Colonial accumulation of experiences was written and shared in academic settings as knowledge commodities, with certificates, diplomas, and degrees intended to promote respect. Aboriginal experiences were transmitted orally, through steeped contextual tradition, for the wellbeing of the individual and the community. The Aboriginal cultural perspective of aging as a "career in authority" with linkage to specialised knowledge and wisdom, and as lifelong learning, was not embraced by neo-liberal academics. Rather, the idea of an Aboriginal career in authority was challenged as belonging to the 'Other' in discursive materialistic order of thought and, thus, ignored. McNally's (2009) work addressed aging, authority, and religion in Ojibwa society. It expounded on the imperatives of Aboriginal peoples as they "doggedly held onto – even accentuated- their maxim to "honor Elders" (p. 2). His work included the review of value for Elders in Ojibwa society as "important for the health and sustainability of communities" (p. 3) and included mastering the social relations, ritual, cosmology, and life cycle (p. 17) as accumulation of knowledge benefits the community for a good life.

Pathology of Age Versus Age as Career

There was a difference in how aging was perceived between Aboriginal and colonial cultures. Modern colonial studies of aging was marketable, labelled as a career in gerontology, "Gerontology program will help you develop the skills and expertise to become a leader in the field of elder care" (Sheridan College, n.d., para. 1) and approached as pathological study of the deteriorating physical body that required treatment and care apart from family and their younger members. "The Gerontology program studies old age and the aging process. The purpose is to increase knowledge about old age and to improve the quality of life for older adults" (Laurentian University, 2013, para.1).

In Basil Johnston's (1976) story called *The Four Hills*, Chejauk explained to Weegwauss "The end must be accepted as part of life - Old age is a gift of the Kitche Manitou. As such it is to be cherished; not disparaged" (p. 118). McNally's work demonstrated that the practice of deference towards Elders in Ojibwa society was not pathological but required a demonstration of appreciation by community for their aged members. McNally noted that the stage of being an Elder "requires hard work, the disciplined labour of moral teaching, and the ritualized decorum that constitute the authority of Elders" (p. 2). Wub-e-keniew (Francis Blake) objectified the dynamics of European culture authority on age as hierarchal (McNally, 2009, p. 49). The power structure expected that age and gender were institutionally controlled and this "creates discontinuity in oral history" (McNally, 2009, p. 40). The culture that responded to 'materialism' as a point of reference for worth did not see Aboriginal Elders as having much to offer. Cajete (1994) wrote about the wisdom of Elders who understood this

societal objective: “Elders say these stories, this language, these ways, and this land are the only valuables we can give you” (p. 4). In Ojibwa culture, the Elders were recognized for their wisdom and as being “loving teachers who knew our history and genealogy and who knew about medicines and other herbs - community dynamics and practical psychology” (Wilson, 1996, p. 40). Aboriginal Elders were not “warehoused or segregated.”

The story of Aboriginal peoples since contact with European settlers was unsettling. The authoritative position of Elders in Indigenous society was seen as threatening to success of colonial assimilation. Legislative acts were designed to destroy Aboriginal community connections. The connective cultural memories were expected to exist: (a) despite the negative and turbulent times of separations caused by removal of the people from their lands and onto reservations; (b) despite the bacterial warfare imposed through distribution of blankets and clothing impregnated with the deadly diseases from which there was no immunity, particularly for the elderly and young; (c) despite the removal of children to residential schools; and (d) despite the legislative acts that encouraged the First Nations peoples to join urban living. The government’s enticements extended to Aboriginal peoples to live a colonial materialistic life and to leave reservation poverty behind, was a devious plan for eventual assimilation. The outcome, however, was that Aboriginal holders of knowledge were found on and off reserves and in the heart of urban cities.

Cultural legitimacy and sovereignty were imperatively entwined in the Indigenous Elder deference process and was identified as in need of protection through Article 21 and 22 of the United Nations (2007a, 2007b) Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous

peoples: “Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous Elders.” Such protection was gravely warranted as evidenced by the myriad of books, videos, internet postings of pictures, movies, and quotes interpreted by gazers seeking short cuts as “self-help” knowledge-seekers or “playing Indian-elder” (McNally, 2009, p. xviii). There were some who assumed the role for self-recognition or profit and, thereby, by-passed the knowledge held by Aboriginal Elders. Some projects resulted in dire consequences. In one such example, a number of non-Aboriginal peoples died in a sweat conducted by a non-Aboriginal imitator in an incident known to Aboriginal peoples as the Sedona catastrophe (CBS News, 2011). Chief Arvol Looking Horse (2009), 19th generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe Bundle and well-recognized as a spiritual leader, speaker, and teacher with Elder authority, condemned those who attempted to emulate the ways of Indigenous peoples for capital gain: “our way of life is now being exploited! You do more damage than good” (para. 8).

From a theoretical point of view, on Elder ways, the struggle was to recognize the original peoples in North America as those who “have and do not” have knowledge. It was easier in modern Euro-Western society to fill gaps in knowledge with what was known from neo-colonial written and digitized text than with personal experience under the tutelage of a moral and ethical mentor. The practices of theoretical knowledge that required argument, substantiation, and elaboration, such as the credentialing of a PhD and solidifying the social position of academics, was an issue of authority and extent of textual knowledge. McNally (2009) argued, “Sociologically the shape of Ojibwe wisdom is credentialed knowledge. “ (p. 281). As an outsider, McNally explored “sagacity as the practice of wisdom” (p. 281) and wisdom as “lifelong learning” (p. 282) but it was

"always subject to the ongoing scrutiny of a circle of Elders" (p. 281). He argued that wisdom and knowledge could be addressed separately, easily diluting that knowledge as "efficiently segmented from its context in books, lectures, and classroom exercises" (p. 283). He claimed that Ojibwa wisdom as credentialed knowledge constituted in a community of persons was also about how to conduct oneself through "mastery of gestures, postures, and ways of speaking" (p. 282). "Therefore [Anishnabe] wisdom is not "simply an intellective matter" (p. 281) but is also a spatial, many dimensional relationship with social trajectories and identity that distinctly includes "kinship and age" (McNally, 2009, p. 177).

A Prophecy Confronting the Elders In Transition

With an historical focus, McNally (2009) placed the change in relationship between older people and the young warriors in the 1800s during the time of the making of treaties, as polarized authority/status and tradition/change in response to assimilation policies. He recognized Kugel's (1998) work on Ojibwa politics between 1825-1898, stating that "It had been Elders who had accommodated and even invited important changes in the first place as strategies to secure the survival of community and tradition" (McNally, 2009, p. 177). The resistance to colonialism by the Ojibwa Elders was to take control and mediate the power differential of colonialism by accommodating Christianity. McNally drew the reader to understand what accommodation eventually looked like. McNally observed that Ojibwa community members integrated their spiritual ways into the church but they were not given opportunities to be more than laypersons; "Certain key Elders in the nineteenth century – both men and women – who were at the center of indigenous efforts to make the traditions their own in more familiar Ojibwe idioms of

religious practice" (p. 180). Members of groups sang Christian hymns, so that the Ojibwa language was thus translated and retained. They were called to attend to situations requiring testimony to living the good life and attending to the bereaved at funerals and comforting those who were ill. "Ojibwe singers of hymns in their cultural language is a result of mediation between two cultures, and, interestingly, the singers unconsciously progressed into becoming community recognized Elders" (McNally, 2009, p. 180). Although each community approach may have been different, this story illustrates how the skills and training of Aboriginal Elders enabled peaceful solutions across cultures and as a plan for retaining language and knowledge.

The Fifth of Seven Fires

McNally (2009) noted that the decision of the Elders to accommodate and take control over their lives divided the Ojibwa into two groups: those who trusted the decision of the Elders who acted as civil leaders were primarily "full blood Ojibwe who...largely identified with the accommodations of treaty making and the program of the Episcopalian mission"; and, the militant, "anti-colonial" warriors who were "largely from among the Métis descendants of Ojibwe unions with French or English fur traders, most of whom identified with Roman Catholic missions" (p. 176). The Elders determined to pursue alliance and accommodation as the method to achieve balance and "survival of their communities and the maintenance of core values and practices" (p. 175). In their wisdom, and after much deliberation and consultation, they acted to ensure the future viability of their rights and inheritance to the land through co-existent relationships and sharing, intending that future generations would continue to benefit from Settler knowledge of agricultural practices and school but not lose their identity or cultural

knowledge of the land. The transitional conflict is understandable in the words of the Elders: “Our young men used to take advice of our old men and our old men spoke good words, but they don’t do it now” (Whipple, 1862, as cited in McNally, 2009, p. 176).

This time of transition was foretold by a prophecy called the Seven Fires. The fifth fire was foretold to be a time when “grandsons and granddaughters will turn against the Elders” (Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 90). It was predicted that there would be a fifth fire when the fourth fire was not lit. That fourth fire foretold that the two cultural solitudes would agree to a life of brotherhood in relation to the land. It did not happen.

The fifth fire was characterized as a time when the Anishnabe would be promised great things if they accepted the promise and they turned against the teachings of the Elders. “All those who accept this promise will cause the near destruction of the people.” (Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 90). The1800s was a grievous time for Elders as described within the *Fifth Fire prophecy* that “Elders will lose their reason for living...they will lose their purpose in life” (Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 90). The Ojibwa decision towards anticolonialism was not a violent opposition to the policies and politics of the day. If it was, there might have been a different story to tell in this 21st century. Rather, the approach by the Elders was to put together their wisdom for the survival of Indigenous knowledge as attached to the land.

The Sixth Fire

The debates of resistive binaries in aboriginal society that began with the fifth fire still exist as authority/status and tradition/change, and continuously contemplated for cultural survival against a backdrop of government legislated rights, policies, and politics. These debates were acted out in communities where traditional societies and band

councils and chiefs struggled with government imposed electoral processes and community refusal to alternately engage or disengage as co-opted citizens.

The resistance by the warriors to the decisions of the Ojibwa Elders in the 1800s is the first kinship and spatial gap; a structured fissure that was further compounded with the geographical and forced removal of children to residential schools. This was the prophecy of the *Sixth Fire* when "The Indian language and religion were taken away from the children. The people started dying at an early age...they had lost their will to live and their purpose in living" (Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 91). The Ojibwa Elder population, once great in number, declined.

The Seventh Fire

Reducing the content of Aboriginal knowledge and wisdom as simple rather than as a community imperative, belittled the content in Aboriginal perspectives for lifelong learning incentives. Significantly, McNally's (2009) work on ethnographic researches reveals that respect for old age was a widespread occurrence in primitive societies (p. 18). Despite the negative and nonrelational treatment of their elderly by Settler hierarchal initiatives, the memories of Aboriginal primitive connections were not wiped out during the residential school era.

Ojibwa Elder Eddie Benton-Benai (1998) explained the *Seventh Fire* as linked with the arrival of a New People who he described as "young and had a strange light in his eyes" (p. 91). He did not explain whether these young people were the new generation of settlers. There were many stories of conflicts between the newcomers and original peoples on the land; one of them is embodied as the American Indian Movement (AIM). The last war on the Ojibwa peoples at Leech Lake was less than 75 years old

when the American Indian Movement was formed. McNally (2009) connected the AIM of the 70s as the conduit for revival of an era when the old ones guided and advised (pp. 32, 35, 260-261). The story of Dennis Banks (Banks & Erdoes, 2004) is about his role as one of the leading members and the 71 days until the stand down at Wounded Knee in May of 1973. The story referred to the waking up of Elders. Ojibwa Eddie Benton-Benai, along with many others, was sought out by the AIM members for the guidance he offered with the traditional knowledge he was given from his Elders. The story of AIM was a compelling story about North American Aboriginal rights and the policies and politics that affected their lives.

The Eighth Fire

The sagacity of the Ojibwa Elders in the 1800s was well intentioned. The quest for peace across cultures continued through the Idle No More (n.d.). It was a peaceful revolutionary movement that began with a group of five Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan in November 2012. The movement was influenced by the Occupy Wall Street movement, and then, Occupy Canada (see occupytogether.org for more information). The movements across the nation were a recognizable, peaceful force that included a round dance, awareness, and teach-ins. It motivated Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples around the world to recall responsibilities in their ties to the land as collaborating allies.

Within this movement, there was a renewed search for the guidance and attendance of Elders along with the message that, “Each day that Indigenous rights are not honored or fulfilled, inequality between Indigenous peoples and the settler society grows” (Idle No More, n.d., para. 3). The Idle No More Movement was politically

motivated. It was inspired in part by the fish broth hunger strike by Theresa Spence, Chief of the First Nation Attawapiskat community. Spence's reaction was in response to the continuous legislative attempts to override Indigenous interests in their land, particularly, as embodied in the Omnibus Bill c-45. Some highlights of Bill c-45 did have an effect on the lives of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the court mandate to consult with Aboriginal peoples (McGregor, 2012). The movement problematized the question: When the culture is gone, what will happen to the land? Woo (2011) offers her insight:

> With little investment in the past, the colonizer does not think far into the future. When the environment becomes degraded by toxic waste or mismanagement of other kinds, the colonizer expects to move on to another country – or perhaps to Mars or the Moon. (p. 94)

Woo's (2011) prediction paralleled the *Eight Fire* prophecy told by Benton-Benai (1988)

> It is at this time that the Light Skinned Race will be given a choice between two roads. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eight and final Fire – an eternal Fire of peace, love, brotherhood and sisterhood. If the Light Skinned Race makes the wrong choice of roads, then the destruction which they brought with them in coming to this country will come back to them and cause much suffering and death to all the Earth's people. (p. 93)

Benton-Benai (1988) directed thoughts to the meaning of the two roads. He suggested it be interpreted as the choice of two directions: one, a road originally travelled by the First Peoples, and the other one of technology and development represented as a fast road toward destruction (p. 93). He invited thought as to whether the *Fourth Fire* prophecy might have come to pass had the two nations (Aboriginal and Settlers) joined at the

beginning of the first meeting and become one "mighty nation" in brotherhood and guided by "respect for all living things" (p. 93). McNally (2009) offered his interpretation of this renewal as "Returning to Eldership, both through practices of deference and practices of sagacity" (p. 39). His thoughts were aligned with Benton-Benai's (1988) reckoning with Anishnabe peoplehood and wellbeing.

The Two Roads in Benton-Benai's (1988) story appeared complimentary to the Two Row Wampum story as I was given to understand. The *Sixth Fire* story portrayed opportunity to bring together the people into a brotherhood relationship as was hoped in the predictions for the *Fourth Fire*. The separation of terms for the elderly and Knowledge Holders as Elders was about Aboriginal community values, beliefs, and assumptions and about the worth of the elderly from the perspective of neo-Western colonial educational systems.

The story of Elders was important for understanding the persistence of Aboriginal peoples to reintegrate their Knowledge Holders in the education of their students. Mentoring their lifelong learning continuum into the good life under *the Great Law of Peace* in accordance with the understandings of what the Two Row Wampum Belt symbolized required experienced pedagogical skills with oral renditions based on intergenerational knowledge. Reference to the land was imperative, and the intergenerational stories related to it, as could best be told, by Aboriginal Elders.

Whether or not decolonizing the curriculum in the publicly funded classrooms was possible with the placement of Aboriginal Elders to work on curriculum alongside a teacher, had not yet been challenged. Bougie's (2009) data on declining opportunity of off-reserve students to interact with the older members of their community and the

descriptions of the Aboriginal elderly as a declining population (Rosenberg et al., 2009) was worrisome. There was urgency to prioritize action in the mainstream secondary school classrooms for intergenerational relationships with Aboriginal Elders. This would not be an easy or simple task as the education system had traditionally resisted this with its barriers of policies and politics. The instituted profession of teaching would need to undergo a review of its pedagogical practices prior to embracing Aboriginal Elders as a culturally privileged teaching entity of Knowledge Holders. It was hoped that one day there would be recognition for the oral teachings held by Aboriginal Elders.

CHAPTER FOUR: DREAMING PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION AS A CRITICAL STUDY TO INCLUDE ABORIGINAL ELDERS

The historical timelines in which the rights of Aboriginal peoples were dehumanized and their ethical space destroyed was examined. Inherent in those events is how Aboriginal Elders as the Knowledge Holders, with wisdom drawn from many prior generations on how to live a good life in peace and according to the Laws of the Universe, were stripped of their roles and responsibilities as teachers of lifelong learning when the children were forced into residential schools. When the children returned, they had difficulties relating to their parents and family members who were still living. They were indoctrinated to believe in the promises of the colonial education system. Poole (1972) related a story about ethical space that was attacked through acts of terrorism.

> The movement of sudden and random violence carries with it the movement from original natural occupancy of the world into a world of terror and uncertaintly, which affects everyone and the entire subjective climate (p. 38)…The agent is anonymous, he does not appear, his body is never in evidence, and so the drift towards the destruction of meaning gathers force (p. 40)…The terrorist attempt to deprive space of its ethical significance, to deprive the body of its semantic function as sign and symbol, of its meaningful disposition in space, is in fact an attack upon human reason itself. It becomes impossible to *think* under the new spatial conditions. (p. 40-41)

Aboriginal peoples endured an attack on their carefully designed ethical space that was created through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt as a relational agreement for co-existence and as an extension of *the Great Law of Peace*.

Cross-cultural agreements and understanding were in existence prior to 1613 and the first newcomers, who are now the Settlers, agreed to the customary agreement across cultures. The relationships between the Settlers and Original Peoples deteriorated as the colonial government enacted policies without legislation to protect Settler possession of land and resources without the knowledge of the original landholders. Thus, the stories of Aboriginal peoples included the creeping terrorism that were acts of colonialism but addressed as racism, and cultural differences. Brayboy (2005) suggested that through story, Indigenous peoples could trace acts of colonialism. I direct the reader to consider the value of ethical space in education through the stories of Aboriginal peoples as they were confronted with deteriorating rights, as they struggled under the policies and politics of a foreign government on their land, in their territory, and their spatial space. This section begins with a description of the problem and then an overview of the historical issues that had a sustaining influence on the problem.

The Power Structure

Defining a strategy for policy intervention required a calculated approach to address the barriers of intertwined politics. The task was an overwhelming study alongside the unknowns of a power structure that was intent on extracting resources through illegal ownership claims and a carefully devised education through publicly funded school systems. How could an original people with original land tenure, and with oral descriptions and symbolic relational agreements cut across the cultural barriers to retain their rights to an education that would meet their needs? Jamieson's (1987) description of an Iroquois education offered some insight into tribal cultural needs for an

education. He provided insight into what education looked like when the whole Iroquois community was involved in the education of their people:

- Education was founded in the Great Law of Peace, the very principles of which united Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca and later the Tuscorora, in the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy;
- There was no concept of failure, nor differentiation between gifted and ungifted, fit and unfit;
- Specialization and structured training occurred in only a few instances, and related primarily to religion, health, fortification for security purposes and house-construction;
- The reciting of long ceremonies required a period of training, as an example. These elements were in place before the arrival of the European; Appreciation of all the things which was their experience, was the only real benchmark. (p. 3)

The piecemeal effort to pacify and capitulate the agony of Aboriginal student realities as failing within the publicly funded education system was provincial and local, rather than a national federal concern. There was a current ineffectual attempt, however, by the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC, 2013) to design a federal First Nations Education Act. The weakness in this uni-lateral proposal was based on its own policies for success, with limited perspectives from Aboriginal peoples and their concerns for adequate funding and control over their own education.

In 2011, the Senate report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Education, called for a First Nations Education Act that would provide the necessary resources that

would operationalize an education system inclusive of second and third level structures and would be accepted by the communities (Battiste, 2013, p. 164-165). The federal government approached its design as a reactive response. Battiste explains:

> The diversity of First Nations, Metís and Inuit peoples must be considered in any change, including their participation and voice, considering their unique situations and locations, and involving their leadership and Elders…the government has been responding reactively rather than proactively, developing the rudiments of this legislation in consultation with policy analysts rather than with Indigenous stakeholders in an appropriate consultative process. (p. 165)

The education of Aboriginal peoples was a complicated noninterrelated design of federal and provincial jurisdiction. At the provincial level, the OME (2007b) initiative promoted an education policy framework in consultation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples but the strategies were made within a limited framework. At the postsecondary level, the overall vision of the Deans of Education (2010) Accord on Indigenous Education was compatible with Aboriginal worldviews for an integrated education setting with an echo from the past that stressed the terms for co-existence in the present: "The vision is that Indigenous identities, cultures, languages, values, ways of knowing and knowledge systems will flourish in all Canadian learning settings" (p. 8). It appeared that separate jurisdictional frameworks for policy and funding issues were hindering the dreams and solutions by Aboriginal peoples for their education.

A provincial goal between 2006-2012 was the "introduction of funding to school boards for projects supporting Framework implementations" (OME, 2013, p. 6).

Provincial funds, with the aim of improving aboriginal student outcomes, were competitively disbursed through the institutional coffers of the local publicly funded school boards and schools and based on the submission of written proposals. Generally, federal funds targeted for First Nation student academic success were also dependent on approvals of submitted proposals. Federal funds were funnelled through the local First Nations education authorities. First Nations students who lived off reserve did not benefit from this source of funding, nor did the Metís or Inuit students, as they were under the umbrella of provincial funding until they entered postsecondary education. However, student postsecondary funding was regulated through a process of competition due to limited yearly funding.

There was no space in the provincial, publicly funded education system for First Nations, Metís, and Inuit solutions because that system relied on current empirical data that did not yet exist. First Nations, Metís, and Inuit peoples needed to organize and manage their data before they could pro-actively advocate effectively. Euro-centric authority might have determined the social and professional places of Elders in the education of Aboriginal peoples through their local institutional policies but their decisions were guided by the politics and control of funds for disbursement.

The vision that the education of Aboriginal peoples would become an integrated knowledge set at a national level needed to occur, first, at the provincial and local level. The perceptions of how the local school boards and local schools conducted their relational activities needed to be understood within the colonial historical accounts and the storied experiences of Aboriginal peoples.

Before the establishment of residential schools, the communities of First Nations peoples held their Elders in high esteem and there was no quarrel over the status of Aboriginally derived policy making. The communicative efforts to arrive at decisions were complex, often time-consuming. The process necessary to arrive at a consensus was always a careful strategy that enabled the preservation of the knowledge of countless centuries past and on into the future. The demographical data on the aging population as an incremental value of knowledge held by First Nations, Metís, and Inuit peoples were not clearly understood. George Blondin an Elder of the Slavey/Dogrib put it this way: "Elders are those who can pass on knowledge, now there are not very many Elders left. It seems like they are not needed anymore, the power of White society has changed all that (Kulchyski et al., 1999/2003, p. 403). The indication is that the Settler people did not understand the importance of Aboriginal Elders. There is the story of how the colonial society, or the Settlers who first arrived in North America did not have the kind of knowledge needed to live in co-existence with the First Peoples they encountered.

The first sign of a deteriorating relationship between the two solitudes was in the design of the Two Row Wampum Belt in 1613 with its symbolic reference to two vehicles travelling a river separated by an agreement of noninterference. The confidence of Aboriginal peoples was in the knowledge that they were sovereign and the Settlers required land, but there had to be agreements. This division of relationships was strongly recognized in the stories of the education of Indigenous peoples, particularly those whose ancestors participated in the making of wampum belts and who could address the oral telling of the story. Despite the knowledge that the belt had been made by the people on

the Eastern coast of North America, the message was applicable for all nations as the epistemological understandings of how land and humans are interrelated.

The issues between the two entities were colonial approaches intended to disempower and remove the First Peoples in their involvement with the land. Settler intent was to accumulate resources from the land for material gain. The colonial elites with such titles as “founding fathers,” sent messages to their Settler populations that the rights and moral lifestyles of original peoples were nonexistent and the land was described as unclaimed. Colonial Settlers moved in with intent to claim territory by fencing in their claims and receiving written documents that affirmed such intent as a legal act.

Prior to Settler claims, there were relational agreements between the nations of First Peoples for the use of resources on the land, such as the protocols and processes for understandings of the “Dish with one Spoon” and ceremonial gatherings to affirm oral agreements. So strong were these understandings in the hearts and minds of the First Peoples that there was no need for written text or the need to fence off land. It is fortunate that the quest for peace and the sacredness of such agreements as the Two Row Wampum Belt is still prevalent in the oral knowledge sets of the Aboriginal peoples. The need to acquire the education of colonial peoples became of paramount importance when it was realized that the written word contained the knowledge of the colonial government rather than the practice of oral knowledge.

The Story of Power

The story marks in this study are the historical settings of the colonial Settlers and the oral stories of the First Peoples on the land. The Two Row Wampum Belt of 1613

signifies the beginning of a deteriorating relationship, while the 1763 Royal Proclamation by King George of England describes a paternalistic approach to their relationship with the First Peoples on the land. When the British supplanted the Dutch communities in 1664 (Jamieson, 1987, p. 8), Aboriginal requests for education were taken advantage of as they proposed Settler use of land in exchange for educational services rather than the sale of land. This practice of trading served as a marginalizing enterprise of unequal benefit for Aboriginal peoples. With the acquisition of land upon which to build schools, neo-colonial education became a form of control,

> A matter of itself, separated from other facets of life and controlled by various religious, political and economic concerns. Control was a major issue in this situation, and priority for it placed by the concern which was most pressing at the time, be it economic, political and/or religious. (Jamieson, 1987, p. 3)

Aboriginal people were generally not enabled to participate in the design of education. Rather, the neo-colonial plot became a series of legislative acts that were designed to acquire as much land as possible. Education for Aboriginal people became a format that restricted Aboriginal people from succeeding in their endeavours to accommodate the Settlers to live under the Great Law of Peace. Loss of land, language, and rights to negotiate were imposed and the oral methods, such as story and negotiation for achieving peaceful relations, were ignored. Jamieson traces the relationships as "compromise and transition are issues of the present and may well be into the future" (p. 4).

It is the historical account of the War of 1812 by colonial Settlers that is particularly neglectful. After the war of 1812, negative relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Settlers intensified. Immigrant Settlers intruded on lands they determined

were vacant, despite the sensibilities within the Two Row Wampum Belt that extended understandings of how the land was to be approached, and despite the symbolic references to the relational context for co-existent living and despite treaty agreements. The relational agreement was again broken when the colonial government ignored the pleas of the First People for justice regarding land encroachments. The response to the First Peoples was that colonial legislative rights for advocacy belonged to the Settlers. Indigenous peoples were not afforded the same rights under the same laws. The colonial mindset was that Indigenous peoples were a dying and disappearing savage race and their requests were nonconsequential.

The oral stories of Aboriginal peoples surfaced in textbooks as descriptions of how the exclusion of Aboriginal peoples in historical accounts furthered the belief that Indigenous peoples were negligible participants in the protection of their own lands. Of importance was the relationship that Aboriginal peoples had with different forms of Christianity during the period of the 1820s and 1830s and how those relationships influenced their educational experiences during their times of "social crisis" (D. B. Smith, 1987, p. 286).

Indian Control of Education

Inherent within Aboriginal learning was the willingness to be responsible for knowledge comprised of collective memories. Young-Ing (2006) expresses this idea as "the ultimate responsibility of being the link between one's ancestors and future generations – a cultural concept that has been referred to as the 'time space continuum'" (p. 64). The responsibility for knowledge held by Aboriginal Elders was about understanding relationship building and accommodation across cultures.

The friendships in the period prior to the Residential Schools were acknowledged as respect for the intent of the Two Row Wampum Belt for co-existing relationships across cultures. The events in education that hindered Aboriginal involvement were an extensive study of various legislations designed to segregate and confine Aboriginal peoples. The historical story marks for First Nations, Metís, and Inuit peoples in North America were oral renditions of relational events that happened in their lives such as the children being taken away and placed in residential schools.

Prior to residential schools, there was a movement that initiated Indian control over their education and that confronted language and cross-cultural social status. The story of Indian control of their education occurred after 1812 and prior to 1847 when the Toronto Normal School was established where Ryerson University now stands (Toronto Normal School, circa 1948). The word normal emphasized a strategy to regulate or make usual standard. Without the involvement of First Nations peoples, the school was designed as a colonial priority. At the time of its development, the lives of First Nations peoples were being regulated without their full knowledge. Those in control discounted the cultural prerogatives of First peoples to raise their children. Those who indicated control applied a deficit model theory to argue that First Nations peoples be expediently controlled and that was done by removing the children: "[I]f anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young. The children must be kept constantly within the circle of civilized conditions" (Davin, 1879, p. 12). The colonial residential school methods to educate were designed to eradicate the intergenerational stories of First peoples, their language, and their connection to land and sovereignty. The colonial government subsumed its status as cultural oppressors.

This section will not go into details of the residential school experience story. The story in the 20th century includes the story of "Indian control of education" that was documented in 1972 and commonly known as the *Red Paper Policy* (NIB, 1972). It is one memorable event that responded to the rights of Aboriginal peoples and their education. At the beginning of the 21st century, a First Nations Education Act was designed to further the inequities of relational agreements. This section did not cover the current dilemma of education and the disconnects that existed with the relational understandings of the Two Row Wampum Belt, but rather, the focus was to inform the story that led up to the situation in this 21st century and appreciate the importance of Aboriginal Elders.

The history of Aboriginal education lacked reference to the stories of Aboriginal peoples who attempted to take control of their education. The issues of unresolved funding continued to be an obstacle for any measure of success. The government enacted policies without legislation to ensure the control of Aboriginal peoples and this included denying them access to social resources. There were movements among First Nations peoples that defined the importance of having knowledge of Settler literacy and numeracy in order to conduct trade relations with them. The sections that follow offer a brief story of the *Ohngwehonwe* experience and connects that with the Ojibwa story for control of their education.

The *Ohngwehonwe* Story of Education

An alternate story of the experience of education for the Six Nations of the Grand people was enabled as a result of land negotiations for their settlement as led by War Chief Joseph Brant (D. B. Smith, 1987). Brant was also a friend of Ojibwa Wabonosay

and Welsh August Jones. It was a fascinating story of cultural relationships under the agreement of the Two Row Wampum Belt (Jamieson, 1987).

The Six Nations Council established itself in Ontario in 1784 (Six Miles Deep, n.d.). Prior to that time, the Ojibwa peoples had hunted, trapped, and wandered throughout the territory. An agreement was struck with the Ojibwa peoples for the settlement of the Six Nations along six miles of the Grand River Bank. However, around this time there was evidence that Indians were beginning to be considered a nuisance and in the way of Settler claims for land and resources (Jamieson, 1987; D. B. Smith, 1987). Thus, in the beginning of their relationship, Settlers received land in return for services to teach First Peoples to read, write, and participate in trading relations. As time went on, Settler strategy for land reverted to the creation of myths about First Peoples as a dying race, as losing lands from war and being assimilated.

Not unlike their Ojibwa neighbours, the community members of the Six Nations of the Grand in Ontario demonstrated their desire for education by donating land and helping to build schools within their territory. Jamieson (1987) reported a 1902 announcement by the Six Nations Council that praised the efforts of the Six Nations School Board.

> They have now secured to us a higher standard of education, in many particulars identical with the Ontario School System, and we, also, now have our qualified teachers, educated and trained under the Ontario School system and the Model Schools of Ontario for teachers. (pp. 18-19)

Unfortunately, by 1934 all Indian School Boards or Band council led schools had ceased participation in the control and management of their education (Jamieson, 1987, p. 21).

The government plan for assimilation did not mean to allow for successful Indian Control of Education.

After 1812

A sequence of events included a series of policies after the War of 1812 (Maclean, 2002). The British and Americans ended their War of 1812, thus conveniently relinquishing their need for Aboriginal warriors, and civil relationships declined. On the Canadian side, noted Aboriginal warriors, such as Tecumseh, Chief Shingwauk and his warriors, Ojibwa Chief Wabanosay, and War Chief Joseph Brant and many more from both *Anishnabe* and *Ohngwehonwe* peoples, fought alongside General Brock as allies. Aboriginal peoples were not compensated for the loss of their lands or their contributions to the war effort. However, Government forms of support for the education of Aboriginal education in the form of residential schools was an exchange of land and resources as payment (Chrisjohn & Young, 2006; Jamieson, 1987, MacLean, 2002; Miller, 1996; D. B. Smith, 1987). Thus, began the installation of federal legislation to interrupt the rights of Aboriginal peoples across Canada through policies for a convenient education that would meet the needs of colonial society.

The social structure of life after the War of 1812 appeared to be in flux as immigration, industry, and process of state formation were identified as the main problems. Aboriginal people were struggling with the negative encounters of the newcomers who were encroaching on their lands while military leaders and politicians were legislating their rights without their knowledge. A colonial system of education evolved to deal with the social problems after the war of 1812.

> An effective instrument for instilling appropriate modes of thought and behaviour in to children...did not involve the acquisition of academic knowledge...School systems were designed to solve a wide variety of problems ranging from crime to poverty, and from idleness to vagrancy. (Gaffield, 2013, para. 7)

An alternate story about control of education (MacLean, 2002, 2005; D. B. Smith, 1987) was that Aboriginal peoples demonstrated their capabilities to successfully lay the groundwork for a workable and successful partnership to meet their needs (MacLean, 2002, D. B. Smith, 1987).

In a short time period between 1820–1833 (MacLean, 2002, 2005; D. B. Smith, 1987), Ojibwa control over their education followed an evolving design that put Aboriginal peoples on an equal platform for success in education with the elite Settlers: "the schools offered bilingual instruction, Native teachers and pedagogy based on the Pestalozzi system" (MacLean, 2002, p. 23). It was commonly known that Aboriginal peoples were applying successful learning methods in the classroom that included verbal instructions and written texts in their Indigenous language with English as a second language. Current studies indicate cultures learn best in their first language (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Kovach, 2005). The attempts by Ojibwa peoples in southern Ontario to apply self-deterministic education initiatives were squelched rather viciously as evidenced in the story of Reverend Peter Jones (1802-1856).

A close read of the life of the Reverend Peter Jones offered insights into his struggles to negotiate funding and attract social resources by advocating for a school system on behalf of his people. He travelled extensively throughout Ontario and overseas to present his cause and attract interest. The story of Reverend Peter Jones and that of

Reverend Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882) were entwined. They were close friends, Methodist ministers, and both worked to advance the education of their memberships.

Reverend Peter Jones

The story of early schooling for the Ojibwa peoples began with the friendship of Ojibwa born Wabanosay (1780-1873) and Welsh born Augustus Jones (1757-1836) whose lodges and hunting grounds were along the southern shores of Lake Ontario. Together, they surveyed trails in southern Ontario in the early 1800s. Their combined efforts to mark these trails occurred less than 50 years after the 1763 Royal Proclamation (George, 1763) and a little more than 10 years before the War of 1812. The exchanges within their relationships were respectful and mutual and they became good friends at a time of much racial conflict that centered on Settler greed for acquisition of land. Augustus Jones married the daughter of Wabonosay in the ways of the Ojibwa and together they began to raise two sons. However, the social requirements of Settler life became a wedge between them and Jones subsequently married a Mohawk woman who was willing to accommodate Christian ways into her own culture (D. B. Smith, 1987). The Reverend Peter Jones was the grandson of Wabonosay, and the child of Augustus Jones. Jones was raised in the ways of his Ojibwa mother until his father took him to be educated in the Settler schools (D. B. Smith, 1987).

During a 10-year period of time between 1824 and1833, there is evidence of Indian Control of Education in Ontario due to the missionary work by Reverend Peter Jones and his brother to combine schools with Methodist Christian values and the Ojibwa language across southern Ontario. Reverend William Ryerson (Egerton Ryerson's brother) wrote a letter on March 8, 1827 to another brother (George) indicating the

success of schools under the direction of Reverend Egerton Ryerson and Reverend Peter Jones. D. B. Smith (1987) informed that just the year before in 1826, "the Mississauga converts moved… from round shaped wigwams scattered over a wide area to square homes set closely together in a straight line" (p. 55). The report on the progress of students advancing in their studies was testimony that the social ills reported after the war of 1812 were not evident.

> We visited their schools. They have about forty pupils on the list, but there were only about thirty present. The rest were absent, making sugar. I am very certain I never saw the same order and attention to study in any school before. Their progress in spelling, reading and writing is astonishing, but especially in writing, which certainly exceeds anything I ever saw. They are getting quite forward with their work. (Mulvany & Adam, 1885)

Unfortunately, the schools closed when donations were not enough to sustain the system and the government refused to assist in the funding (MacLean, 2002, 2005; D. B. Smith, 1987).

It appeared that Jones' hopes to educate his people on how to be economically secure and with social status as human beings alongside the Settlers would be successful. His design for a system of education was to accommodate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and included Ojibwa as the first language for his people. His dream was to eventually provide a grounded education that would encourage students to become doctors, lawyers, and teachers as well as successful farmers and business people. His son, Edmund Jones, did become a doctor. The delivery of the Aboriginal designed and delivered curriculum that was evolving was deemed as successful, not as the means to

become assimilated but as D. B. Smith (2013) observed, “With a European education, Ojibwe Christians could learn British law and defend themselves and their remaining land base” (p. 22).

> The Ojibwa expected to have at least one school directed by an Aboriginal person from their community, and eventually to be running their own independent school system, staffed by Ojibwa. They also expected that the schools would provide both practical manual skills and an advanced education, in preparation for professional training as doctors, lawyers and teachers. (MacLean, 2005, p. 94)

The first school under the guidance of Reverend Peter Jones existed in a community building that served as a school, a Methodist Chapel, and a meeting lodge at the thriving Credit Indian Village in southern Ontario. Students of any culture were welcomed. The control of education by First Nations peoples was a successful partnership with the Methodist movement to include other First Nation communities and Settler students.

Reverend Peter Jones travelled across Ontario to visit newly built schools such as along the Bay of Quinte, and central Ontario to advocate for schools where students could reside to gain new skills and knowledge with the assistance of Methodist funds. D. B. Smith (1987) determined he visited Chief Shingwaukonse in 1836 and 1855. I imagine the two spoke about the trip that Chief Shingwauk took with his son, Augustine Shingwauk, and other leaders by canoe to York [Toronto] to see the King’s representative in 1832 to request a school (Miller, 1996). Jones travelled across the border of the United States and Britain to gain attention to his concerns about land and education.

> By the mid-1830s, Peter Jones must have felt proud of all that the Methodists and Ojibwa had accomplished in just ten years. The Ojibwa were making a transition

> to a more secure economic footing. Most bands were settling on their Reserves, and learning how to farm. There were day schools on every Reserve. (MacLean, 2005, p. 99)

The school thrived. MacLean (2002, 2005) and D. B. Smith (1987) provided insight on how the Aboriginal Christian missionaries promoted its success and strove to support its design. Despite Jones' commitment to the Methodist Church, he was reputed to have stored his traditional knowledge and bundle as well as his spiritual name and recorded this into his journal, which was later published in 1861. He died in 1856 and did not have success to see his people practice their rights as landowners or regain measures for Indian control of education.

Egerton Ryerson

Egerton Ryerson was "renowned as the founder of the modern Ontario school system" (D. B. Smith, 1987, *Figure* 6), credited as "the founder of Canadian curriculum" (The Canadian Encylopedia, n.d.), and saw "state-controlled schooling as the primary means of assimilating "alien" elements (courtesy PAO/S-2641; D. B. Smith, 1987). Ryerson University established the connection between the residential schools and Egerton Ryerson in their Truth and Reconciliation Statement:

> However, while Egerton Ryerson supported free and compulsory education, he also believed in different systems of education for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. These beliefs influenced, in part, the establishment of what became the Indian Residential School system that has had such a devastating impact on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people across Canada. While Egerton Ryerson did not implement or oversee Indian Residential Schools, his ideas were used by others to

> create their blueprint. It is important to acknowledge this connection. (Ryerson University Alumni Relations October , 2014, para 3).

There was an indication that Egerton promoted the ideals of a free and public education that would not make reference to Christianity (Ryerson's University Aboriginal Education Council, 2010). Yet, Aboriginal peoples were subjected to the administration of residential schools by Christian orders. Other studies recognized the First Peoples attempts to gain social status through Christianity and how that intersected with their education, such as McNally (2009).

The Toronto Normal School, the first provincial institution for the systematic training of elementary school teachers, was established in 1847 through the initiative of the Reverend Egerton Ryerson, who was then Chief Superintendent of Schools for Canada West. At first, the Normal School had to provide academic instruction for some poorly educated student teachers, but, increasingly, emphasis was placed on professional training. As a result, the Toronto Normal School contributed significantly to the gradual improvement of teaching standards throughout Ontario and it became a leading centre for the training of teachers. The title of a Normal School became known as Teachers' College. If it were not for landmarks such as historical plaques, the connective pieces in relation to the education of Aboriginal peoples was not obvious. In 1941 the Normal School was moved to a different site and renamed Toronto Teachers' College in 1953 (Toronto's Historical Plaques, n.d.).

With the continual encroachment of Settlers on their land, the New Credit Mississauga Indians left their New Credit Village in 1847, but not before the government advertised the sale of their lands "under the direction of the Indian department" led by

J.S. Dennis, who surveyed the land in 1846" (Fitzgibbon, n.d., para. 17). During this time, Aboriginal people were depicted as not having the ability to be sober, industrious, and civilized, nor capable of handling their financial affairs. The cultural safety of Aboriginal children was at risk.

During Ryerson's (1847) post as Chief Superintendent of Education in Upper Canada, he complied with a request to disprove Aboriginal peoples as capable of being social and spiritual human beings in a letter to George Vardon, Assistant Superintendent of Indian Affairs. In his letter, Ryerson stated that for Aboriginal people "nothing can be done to improve and elevate his character and condition without the aid of religious feeling. This information must be superadded to all others to make the Indian a sober and industrious man [Ryerson, 1847, p. 73]" (Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council, 2010, p. 3). In justifying his position that education should be different for Settler and Aboriginal children, Ryerson explained:

> It is a fact established by numerous experiments, that the North American Indian cannot be civilized or preserved in a state of civilization (including habits of industry and sobriety) except in connection with, if not by the influence of, not only religious instruction and sentiment but of religious feelings [p. 73]. (ibid, p. 3)

Although Egerton did not oversee the residential schools, the demise of Aboriginal peoples was set. Their children were to be schooled through the residential schools in an effort to instil the Christian beliefs of the colonial Settlers and establish colonial accepted skills for the economic market. The goal was to colonize Aboriginal children by

removing them from their rights to land, stripping them of their identity, and preparing them to participate in an industrial society.

Despite the work of the Reverend Peter Jones to address the rights of Aboriginal peoples and resist the encroachment of their land, after his death in 1857, the Gradual Civilization Act, Civilization of Indian Tribes Act was passed to assimilate them. By 1869 the *Indian Act* became more restrictive as the government sought to squeeze the Indian onto reserved lands (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, n.d.a). This Act offered Indians the opportunity to participate in Settler society; that is, to move off their reserved lands and give up Aboriginal rights related to status and band membership. This action was akin to immigration policies. The invitation was a futile effort as Aboriginal peoples opted to keep their identity. Milloy (2008) offered a more detailed account of the *Indian Act* between 1869-1969 while Richardson (1993) and many others offered the stories.

By 1867, there were established industrial schools or manual labour schools for both on and off reserve peoples across Canada. The model for Industrial Schools became the Indian Residential School (Anishnabek Nation, n.d.; D. B. Smith, 1987). At that time, the British North America (BNA) Act made Indian education a federal responsibility and residential schools as well as reserve day schools were built. “By 1900 there were some 226 federally funded day schools on Indian reserves” and “64 residential schools in Canada” (The Canadian Encyclopedia, n.d., para. 3). The last residential school closed in 1996 (Anishnabek Nation, n.d.)

There was no mention of a partnership or relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the colonized society for the training of Aboriginal peoples as professionally

recognized teachers. As the students left residential school, they had the opportunity to become teachers if they were willing to become enfranchised; that is, to relinquish their inherit rights as first peoples on the land, or to return to teach in their community day schools. This began a period of segregation and limitations for social and academic status, particularly for First Nations teachers with cultural status intact, to work as professionals with entitlements, alongside teachers who taught in the provincially mandated systems. It would not be until 1985 that Canada's Parliament would bring the federally legislated *Indian Act* into accord with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The struggles for professional recognition included the story of Aboriginal teacher training programs but those were not addressed within this document. It was sufficient to say that Aboriginal Elders as educators were ignored in the provincial school classroom. The system was not designed to include Aboriginal Elders as educators, or as designers of curriculum for Aboriginal student success. There was an enforcement of the provincial curriculum on reserves as federal funding can be refused in on-reserve schools. The battle for control of funds was an issue when First Nations communities rejected solutions offered by the government. The story of resistance to accept colonial oppression continued through education. This resistance intensified with the applications of the *Indian Act* (1876).

The *Indian Act*

After 1847, there were various additions to the *Indian Act* (1876) designed to prohibit Aboriginal peoples from leaving their reserves. This had an impact on their involvement in Settler communities to visit, conduct trade, visit their children in the residential schools, and in the conduct of their social activities. Settler people were not

allowed to trade with Aboriginal peoples and were duly fined if they were caught doing so. First Nations peoples were repressed to the extent that they were looked upon as primitive and a deteriorating race (Berkhofer, 1978; Cooper, 1826; Hurley, 1999) in need of protection.

The British North America Act of 1867 is perceived by the First Peoples to be an agreement that the land would be protected against further encroachments but in written text it "granted the federal Parliament legislative authority over 'Indians, and Land Reserved for the Indians"' (Hurley, 1999, para. 1).

By 1876, the colonial Settlers had demonstrated their total disregard for the original relational agreement for noninterference in the affairs of the First Peoples. Without their knowledge or involvement, the colonial government consolidated an *Indian Act* in 1876 for the purposes of land management and assimilation through an administrative body. It became recognized as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). In 2009, the *Indian Act* was managed under Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC).

In 1880, an amendment declared any First Nations person obtaining a university degree to be automatically enfranchised. They were not able to claim their degrees and be qualified to teach in the provincial system, unless they enfranchised. The intent of this legislation was that the enfranchised Indian would continue to reside in the federally reserved community but outside the terms of the *Indian Act*. Aboriginal peoples refused an offer that would legally integrate them into colonial society at the expense of their own beliefs, values, and heritage. Herein began the resistance in education for the

majority of Aboriginal peoples who were under treaty agreements. Enfranchisement legislation existed until 1985.

The following is a sample list of sections added to the *Indian Act* since 1876, and which clearly illustrates racism and oppression with purpose:

- 1880: Section 70, Indian governments were denied the power to determine how to allocate their monies and resources (Mathias & Yabsley, 1986, 1991).
- 1885: After the Riel Rebellian, a "pass system" was designed to control the management of Indians. First Nations people could not leave their reserves without permission of the Indian Agent. Any First Nations people found in town without a pass were charged under the Vagrancy Act. The pass system was still in use in some areas as late as 1930 (Barron, 1988).
- 1880: Section 3 of the *Indian Act* was passed prohibiting beliefs and practices of various First Nations ceremonies and spelling out the penalties of fines and incarceration if found guilty. Further, with this act, the Indian Agent could take any item deemed to be related to the offence (Mathias & Yabsley, 1986, 1991).
- 1927 Section 141 federal legislation denies First Nations access to courts (Mathias & Yabsley, 1986, 1991).

Each one of these acts prevented Aboriginal peoples from being successful in their educational endeavours, in their business activities, or pursuing their rights as equal participants on the land that they inhabited prior to the arrival of the newcomers. Today Indigenous peoples in North America are still living under a colonial system of control.

The *Indian Act* still exists but it has changed to lift many of the restrictive measures for their education. It is a study in itself.

In Canada, the Assembly of First Nations (2005) clearly identified First Nations peoples as distinct and sovereign peoples capable of being in charge of their own affairs and prepared to write their own jurisdictional policies. They outlined the context for their education and advocated for their treaty rights in education.

> First Nations have cultural, socio-economic, and demographic characteristics that are distinct from the rest of the country. Moreover, First Nations are building upon different societal institutions and work within a unique and restrictive regulatory structure. As a result, First Nations are often not well served by generic programs and policies. Only First Nations can properly incorporate these differences into program and policy changes that would meet their needs. (AFN, 2005, p. 8)

The statement itself is clearly an indication of an education divide, an indication of colonial resistance to recognize First Nations peoples with rights to determine and address their educational needs on their own terms. Such initiatives are investigated by the Anishnabek (Tarbell, Manual, Martin, & Madahbee, 2008). First Nations clarified that their concerns for the education of their students are not only on federally reserved land, but extend to those First Nations peoples living off reserve. However, the terms for the federally funded education of First Nation children is different than the terms for those First Nations children living off reserve and attending schools under provincial funds.

An examination of the unresolved tensions and policy influences on teacher practices (Coburn, 2005; Kanu, 2005) revealed lack of recognition for an influential Aboriginal pedagogical framework despite the extensive number of references to the importance of Aboriginal Elders with knowledge and wisdom as educators with an oral role. One reference is that Aboriginal peoples rely on relationships amongst one another, and those relationships include that which is seen and unseen as related to the land. McNally (2009) argues, "The presence of an esteemed elder in the classroom also conveys a particular ethical responsibility to the process of learning toward community and environmental health" (p. 154).

Colonial methods used to educate First Nations peoples served to eradicate Indigenous stories. The signs that there was a current, ongoing, and continuing battle against cultural oppression continued to be evident. Resistance of the educational system to accommodate Aboriginal solutions continued.

Aboriginal Identity- North American Identity

An update of relationships in education since 1613 at the time of treaty making with the Two Row Wampum Belt included the *Indian Control of Education Red Paper Policy* (NIB, 1972). It was anticipated that the current generation would apply activities to support the lighting of the Eighth Fire but this required certain understandings.

Aboriginal Elder Merle Assance Beedie from Beausoleil First Nation told a story that it was Jacques Cartier who asked what was the name of the country and the Algonquin replied Kenada. She explained "K" means land. Kena means everyone and everything. "Da" means heart. "So the actual name of our country is 'Kenada' – everything has heart, everyone has heart (Switzer, 2012, p. 4).

McArthy's (1994) conversation with Cayuga (Iroquois) Elder Bob Jamieson in 1993 established the fact that "we [Six Nations] were already a Nation with a Constitution" (p. 37) in 1867 at the time of Canada's Confederation. Thus, "that's when Canada became a Nation within our Nation" (McArthy, 1994, p. 37). It was undisputed that there were original peoples inhabiting and organizing their social, economic, political, and educational activities in North America prior to contact (MacLean, 2002, 2005; D. B. Smith, 1987; Woo, 2003, 2011). Yet, in 1876 and 1886, Canada's *Indian Act* defined "a person as an individual other than an Indian" (*Indian Act*, 1876 Item 12; *Indian Act*, 1886).

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007b), Aboriginal peoples are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The OME (2007b) document did not address the various tribal affiliations of each group. The current literature lists factors that affected Aboriginal student success but did not measure the specific impacts of diverse Aboriginal cultures such as Anishinaabe or *Ohngwehhonwe* Elders in the classroom. This study transcended the colonized view of educating students into learning of, or with, the meaning of Western science, community, and democracy for their academic success. The colonial ways to educate existed in discursive materialism. Perhaps it was the subjective, oral nature of Elder wisdom that associated experience as the authority to guide sensibilities within relationships of the seen, and unseen that cannot be captured within a textbook or any like media.

Population Identity

Educating Aboriginal students was not always a political issue. There was a time when Aboriginal peoples outnumbered the newcomers, when they educated the

newcomers on how to live on the land and how to use the available resources. The numbers of Indigenous peoples greatly declined with the arrival of the newcomers who exposed them to unfamiliar diseases. There was no record of exact numbers but there were attempts to calculate the population of Canada's First Peoples.

> The population figures refer only to the white and are derived from *Seventh Census of Canada, Vol. 1, Summary, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa, 1936*. From the estimates of Rosenblat [1967]...it would seem that the population of Indians and Eskimos was probably around 75,000 in 1820. (Maddison, 1995, p. 96)

The general message perceived was that Canada's federal budget was a drain on resource development to maintain the terms of the agreements made with the First Peoples. The colonial government assimilative goals appeared to take precedence over this argument. Tracking the population of Aboriginal peoples was at first a method to demonstrate their decline. Saku's (1999) census revealed population results in 1871. Table 1 did not divide the Aboriginal population as First Nations, Metis, and Inuit, but, rather, provided a sense of their declining numbers throughout the years as a mere 2.9% of Canada's population.

The Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE; 2010) was informed by the 2006 Canadian Census description that 1,172, 790 or 3.8% (see Table 2) of the current Canadian population is of Aboriginal identity: 60% are First Nations, Métis are 33%, Inuit 4 %, and 54% of all Aboriginal people live in an urban centre while 48% are

Table 1

Population Data 1871-1996 as Taken from Saku, J. (1999)

Census Year	Total Aboriginal Indian/Metis/Inuit	% Total Population	Ontario's Population	Canada\s Population	Canada's Immigrants
1871	102, 358	2.9	12,278	1,620,851	
1881	108, 547	2.5			
1901	127, 941	2.4			
1911	105, 611	1.5			
1921	114, 083	1.3			
1931	128, 890	1.2		10,376,786	22%
1941	160,937	1.4			
1951	165, 607	1.2			
1961	220, 121	1.2			
1971	312,765	1.5			
1981	491,465				
1986	737,035				
1991	1,045,885				
1996	1,101,960	2.8	141,525		

Note: Data from Table 2: Aboriginal population (single origins) 1871-1971 (Saku, 1999, p. 370); Table 3: Changes in Aboriginal Population and NWT 1981,1986, 1991 and 1996 (Saku, 1999, p. 372).

Table 2

Population Data 2006

	Canada's Aboriginal peoples	Aboriginal percentage in Canada	Ontario's Aboriginal peoples
2006	1,172,790	3.8	242, 495

Sources: Stats Canada 2006

aged 24 or younger. They are the fastest growing segment of the Aboriginal population (p. 3). The Aboriginal population is not declining. It is increasing.

Cultural Safety: Indian Control of Education

In 1969, the government's White Paper (AANDC, n.d.b) assimilation policy was responded to with the *Red Paper "Indian Control of Education"* (NIB, 1972). The government at that time accepted the *Red Paper* as policy but did not respond with direct action. The story I heard was that the government did not understand the position of Aboriginal peoples. In that policy, there was an invitation to light the next fire but there appeared to be a slow response to such an initiative. Residential schools continued to operate.

The 1990's began a period of healing initiatives from the residential school experience. National Chief Phil Fontaine revealed his own abuse in residential schools and he called for recognition, compensation, and public apology (CBC.ca, 1990) Since then there was a series of task forces, commissions, public apologies, reports, and research on Aboriginal peoples and their educational rights.

The story of Indian control of education was also a call for cultural safety. The health field announced its intent to address this need through organizations such as the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (2009), Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, (2009), and National Aboriginal Health Organization (2004a,2004b, 2008). Brascoupé and Waters (2009) focused on factors for the application of cultural safety while Adler and Greyeyes-Brant (2011) filmed student responses for their needs. The literature lacked reference to how Aboriginal cultural safety was applied within the schools and classrooms. Through

the work of health and social education programs (Baskin, 2006), and more recently, homelessness initiatives (Bird, Thurston, Oelke, Turner, & Christiansen, 2013), a growing attention was paid to relationships and providing a better service through relationship building. The concern was that racism was a hindrance to decolonialism, and that was a very real and current dilemma (Assembly of First Nations, 2009).

Current Story Marks

The events that had an impact on the cultural safety of Aboriginal students in the education system were discussed in Aboriginal communities but perhaps not understood as important within the delivery of lessons in publicly funded classrooms. It was the Aboriginal student who was expected to field the questions as well as the racial remarks about current events that impacted their comfort in the publicly funded schools and classrooms. The following points were but story segments of a cumulative story of occurrences that impacted the lives of Aboriginal peoples over the last 20 years. Each story is too long to tell within this document.

- 1994 - the RCMP created a Native Residential School Task Force to examine all residential schools in operation from 1890 – 1984 (LeBeuf, 2011)
- 1996 - Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report completed
- 1997 – United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights was not accepted by Canada, United States, Australia, and New Zealand (United Nations (2007a).
- 1998 - First public apology delivered by Jane Stewart, Canada's Minister of Indian Affairs (AANDC, 1998). Another apology followed 10 years later by Prime Minister Harper (AANDC, 2008)

- 2005 – The federal Office of the Auditor General Report revealed First Nations students were lagging 23 years behind in academic success as compared to the general student population (OAG, 2005)
- 2007 – Ontario Ministry of Education First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy document was the result of consultations during 2006. A provincial Aboriginal Education Office was established;
- 2008 – Public apology made by Prime Minister Harper to the survivors of residential schools (AANDC, 2008);
- 2009 – 2014 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]* took place. On February 12, 2012, the commission released an interim report that resulted in a Residential Schools Settlement Agreement ordered by the Canadian Court. The announcement indicated that the Aboriginal story about their experiences be a part of Canadian knowledge but there was resistance from the churches and government, including the Indian Affairs offices, for the release of associated historical documents. A legal suit in 2012 was designed to retrieve them. In April 30, 2013, the Assembly of First Nations noted the lack of collaboration between the government of Canada and the TRC (AFN, 2013b);
- December 9, 2010 - National Panel on First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education was created with its first interim report release in February 2011 (AANDC, 2011). The Chiefs of Ontario independently submitted their study (New Agenda Working Group, 2012).

These stories are each important as they are indications that over time, attempts to support the rights of Aboriginal peoples were being made and there were signs of resistance to materialistic retribution for their losses.

Rights

If schooling continues to be the primary means of assimilating alien elements and Aboriginal peoples were still resisting their assimilation, there was an obvious disconnection. The situation for Aboriginal peoples over the years was a litany of lawyers, legal fees, and challenges to the government over rights entrenched in Canada's constitution but not yet fully applied for the benefit of Aboriginal peoples whether they live on their governed reserve lands or not. The task of presenting comprehensive coverage of rights, policies, and politics that were the source of conflict at the cultural divide was necessary to fully understand the extent of how rights, policies, and politics impacted upon the education of Indigenous peoples. This section was designed to raise awareness of the complex associations at many levels: Immigrant and Aboriginal treatment and rights; Section 35; equal funding; land claims; The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indgenous Peoples, Public School Acts; and social movements of protest.

Immigrant Pedagogy or Modern Treatment of Identity and Rights

I understood pedagogy as "to teach in a way that leads. Pedagogy is always ideological and political" (Denzin et al., 2008, p.7). Indigenous peoples were political. Policy ordered and controlled Aboriginal futures in their own territories since 1763 (George, 1763). After the War of 1812, legislative acts, such as the *British North America (BNA) Act of 1867* and the *Indian Act,* were imposed. Indian and Northern Affairs

(INAC; 2009), which was the administrative body of the *Indian Act*, sought to enmesh Aboriginal peoples as entrenched with rights within Canada's colonial state, and thereby recognized Aboriginal peoples as sovereign but under the thumb of the Canadian government. AANDC carried on the vision from INAC;

> Our vision is a future in which First Nations, Inuit, Métis and northern communities are healthy, safe, self-sufficient and prosperous - a Canada where people make their own decisions, manage their own affairs and make strong contributions to the country as a whole. (para. 2)

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) was known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The presence of this Act did not recognize Aboriginal peoples as sovereign North American people but demonstrated the thinking that they are oppressed and marginalized on a daily basis. The internet site of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada uni-laterally replaced the word Indian with Aboriginal. Today, an examination of the colonial wording reveals that the government of Canada is determined to help Aboriginal peoples based on colonial terms: "Improve social well-being and economic prosperity; develop healthier, more sustainable communities; and *participate more fully in Canada's political, social and economic development - to the benefit of all Canadians*" [italics added] (para. 4). Canada's approach to Aboriginal people could best be compared and described as an approach parallel to immigrants, as adopted children in need of cultural guidance under Canadian rules, rather than as an approach to sovereign, First Peoples of North America and rich in land and resources. The approach to Aboriginal peoples was to portray them as children unable to manage their own affairs and in need of Canada's guidance and protection, not

unlike newcomers to this land. The words *"to the benefit of all Canadians,"* however, added an understanding of Aboriginal peoples, not as First Peoples on the land with inherent rights but as a people subservient to the state of Canada. Canada's message to immigrant peoples was that the Canadian government dominated with authority and offered benefits gleaned from the "*life of the country."* The posting signified Canada as a benevolent caring country that, admits immigrants, foreign students, visitors and temporary workers who help Canada's social and economic growth; resettles, protects and provides a safe haven for refugees; helps newcomers adapt to Canadian society and become Canadian citizens; manages access to Canada to protect the security and health of Canadians and the integrity of Canadian laws; "helps Canadians and newcomers *to participate fully in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the country."* [italics added] (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009, date modified October 19, 2012, para. 5). It was expected that immigrants were willing subjects under Canadian rules for their citizenship. In 2005, the immigrant population in Ontario was 140,533 (Manitoba Immigration Facts, 2005, p. 8). Ontario's Aboriginal population was listed at 242,495 in 2006. The total of Ontario's population in 2006 was 12.16 million. Educating the population about original landholders was not an easy task when the numbers desiring to avoid the truths considered themselves to be greater than the truth.

Although Aboriginal peoples and peoples with immigrant status were relegated to colonized status, a potential decolonizing outlook toward each other could be better addressed as allies. Yet, there is a decline in positive attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples.

> Recent information from a 2013 attitude survey shows that the negative perception of Aboriginals has increased and the positive attitudes declined, most markedly in English Canada. Although more positive attitudes were reported by immigrants overall, there was a consistent 1 in 4 respondents who reported low trust of Aboriginals among all Canadians, including among immigrants. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2013)

The assumption was that the school system was not promoting trust for Aboriginal peoples. This was an issue that needed to be addressed in the classroom, particularly since the Aboriginal peoples were over the one million mark according to Statistics Canada (2006).

The Story of Section 35

Section 35 of the Constitution was an ongoing story of negotiation and reconciliation. The work to progress for mutual understandings in changing times and done through the court system, was expensive and time consuming.

Part II of the Canadian Constitution determined the rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada as Section 35 of *the Constitution Act 1982* (Department of Justice, n.d.; Peach, 2011), "which is essentially a Charter of Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples" (Nahwegahbow, 2012, p. 34). Section 35 required the Crown, federal and provincial governments, to act in good faith to fulfill its obligations to Aboriginal peoples. Those obligations concerned those "human rights that are particular to indigenous peoples, aboriginal and treaty rights" (Nahwegahbow, 2012, p. 34).

Prior to the design of section 35 of *the Constitution*, it was the *Indian Act* – section 88 "which made provincial laws subject to terms of treaties" (Nahwegahbow,

2012, p. 34). The Supreme Court of Canada determined that Section 35 of *the Constitution* was a base for reconciliation and negotiation (Nahwegahbow, 2012). It was the point of reference upon which the Courts made reference to the responsibilities of the Crown to adhere to the honor of the Crown (Peach, 2011; Woo, 2011) and to reconcile "the pre-existence of aboriginal societies with the sovereignty of the Crown" (Nahwegahbow, 2012, p. 36).

Insuring adherence to Section 35 is an ongoing activity through the courts as Section 35 has positioned Aboriginal peoples to challenge the Crown (see Figure 2) to address their rights on the basis of Section 35: (1) as, "The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed" (Department of Justice, n.d.).

Subparagraph (2) defined Aboriginal Peoples of Canada as including the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada and subparagraph (3) outlined the intent: "For greater certainty, in subsection (1) *"treaty rights"* includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired" (Department of Justice, n.d.). The next subparagraph addressed gender rights as "Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons" (Department of Justice, n.d.).

Figure 2: Towards understanding Aboriginal rights.

Land Claims

Historically, Aboriginal peoples could not gather to conduct meetings to address their concerns, could not fundraise to hire a lawyer, and could not participate in Canada's legal system (Barron, 1988; Hurley, 1999; Mathias & Yabsley, 1986, 1991). Mitigated in this quagmire of rights was the intent to colonize and assimilate the Original Peoples of North America as separated citizens of incorporated United States of America and Canada. During the 1800s and until the end of the residential school era in the 1990s, Canada's *Indian Act* was faulted for taking advantage of its paternalistic dealings with their wards as they assumed their duties as executives over a presumably dying race of people, and dispersed a nonlegal right over lands and resources. An examination of illegal land holdings was stressful on the generations of Aboriginal peoples who looked back into their heritage to rediscover the places where their ancestors once lived independently of the newcomers and shared the fruits of the land.

Equally distressing was the realization of non-Aboriginal families who found themselves on the government list of land claims. One such case was an angered mother who was struggling to complete mortgage payments so that her grandchildren might have property ownership. I share the story in my journal and how I responded through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt:

> For a while, I felt this tension between myself, and the wife of my husband's good friend. Despite our amiable visits, I felt an animosity I could not understand. One day, she was quick to question me, one person amongst a band membership of more than 20,000, why we thought we owned the land and then to defiantly state that, "you have no right to what I have done for myself". I reached back into my

memories to see if I could hear the voices of those gone on as to how I should respond. I merely heard the word “kindness”. I responded by first letting her know I understood her struggle to overcome the feeling that she had been deceived and that perhaps she ought to confront her city council as they had taken up where their ancestors had left to deceive the many generations that came after them. Meanwhile, I could only assure her that for myself, I could not see my band council marching in and dragging her out of her home and sending her away to a foreign location where she would have to again struggle to create another place of comfort at her age. I was sure she would be able to stay where she was but probably would have to recognize that ownership of the land was an issue currently being played out as a reconciliation process. I invited her to understand by reviewing the history on the land, that as far as my family ancestors were concerned, we were to conduct our relations in peace. We ended the conversation when I said to her: “We are all victims of the past but perhaps more so are the Aboriginal peoples because the Canadian government made it illegal for them to fight for what belonged to them. The newcomers treated Aboriginal peoples as non-humans in the hopes they would die off and there would be no grief for them as they freely took over the vast land and its resources”. She nodded her head in contemplation and then expressed her understanding that she had been led to believe she should be angry at the natives for what they were doing but she had the beginnings of a more realistic understanding. Later, her husband who had realized his own history as a [cultural] person from another place of land across the ocean, expressed his gratefulness for my responses as he could not quell her

> anxious spirit. The area of land my friends are living on is within the six miles west of the Grand River. The Six Nations territory is six miles on each side of the river. **(**Journal, Summer 2008)

The current land claims by both the government imposed Six Nations Council and the traditional council of Confederacy Chiefs are in agreement for their land claim that is an ongoing focus of study. The Haldimand Treaty outlined the commitment of the British to reestablish the Six Nations community as an agreement for their Loyalty during "the American Revolutionary War (1776-1783)" (Dodek, 2011, para. 1). The 1784 Haldimand Proclamation (Dodek, 2011, p.12) is under scrutiny and negotiation. It is but one example of documents that are referred to in the oral knowledge sets of the people of Six Nations of the Grand. Every nation has its own knowledge sets.

In my personal search to know the place of my mother's ancestors, I came across the stories of how they lost their lands when they had to hurriedly abandon their place of living when a war was enacted in their back yard (see D. B. Smith, 1987). I was told another story about how discrimination against women forced another ancestor from the land she paid for and she was never reimbursed (see Haig-Brown, 2006, and Steckley, 1999).

There were many calls to educate the Canadian population on the history of relations between the newcomers and the original inhabitants at least to a 180 degree angle so that the interpretations were argued in the front of reality rather than a defensive story to mislead the current generation. It was an expensive venture to argue for Aboriginal rights but it was a direction that was expected by the colonial society.

Internationally, the rights of Aboriginal peoples were supported and there was a call to all countries to deal with its Indigenous peoples as human beings.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples

Although the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007b) was often referred to as a moral law, it had the effect of encouraging legal recourses in negotiation and reconciliation processes. Upon pressure from the global community, Canada finally endorsed the Declaration in 2010. Prior, contrary to an unequivocally clear historical record, Canada's Prime Minister announced it had not participated in the colonization of its Aboriginal peoples: "We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them," (Ljunggren, 2009, para. 11). The history of the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was one that began in this century at the time of worldwide concern for their welfare. It had various sectors for ensuring the rights of Indigenous peoples was recognized, such as:

- Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- Human Rights Council Working Group on Human Rights and Business

I was a young university student in the Native Studies stream when I learned that Indigenous peoples around the world were affected by colonialism. Although I had been taught to respect myself, my family, my ancestors, and to be kind to another culture, I did not learn how to organize my thoughts about racism, discrimination, and prejudice until I learned about worldwide measures to address human rights. I spoke to my children and

grandchildren and took them to landmarks, wrote out descriptions of their ancestry, and suggested that if anyone of them wanted to study Indigenous education, they could begin by knowing the organizations that addressed Indigenous rights around the world such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. Education was no longer a local issue but a global and legal interest.

Equal Funding

The latest ongoing conflict was First Nation's assertions that the federal government was not providing funding equal to the provincial funding formula for schools on reserve. The history of federal funding included the residential school era and legislation denying First Nations people their rights to diplomas and degrees. Mathias and Yabsley (1991) listed the federal and provincial legislation that restricted and denied Indian Rights in the appendix of their document concerning "Prohibition on obtaining advance education, automatic enfranchisement" as follows,

> A. Federal Legislation
>
> *Indian Act*. S. C. 1880, C. 28, s. 99(1).
>
> 99(1) Any Indian who may be admitted to the degree of Doctor of Medicine, or to any other degree by any University of Learning, or who may be admitted in any Province of the Dominion to practice law either as an Advocate or as a Barrister or Counsellor, or Solicitor or Attorney or to be a Notary Public, or who may enter Holy Orders, or who may be licensed by any denomination o/Christians as a Minister of the Gospel, may, upon petition to the Superintendent-General, ipso facto become and be enfranchised under the provisions of this Act; and the

> Superintendent-General may give him a suitable allotment of land from the lands belonging to the band of which he is a member. (p. 44-45)

The notion that Aboriginal peoples might be offered land and professional status upon conditions of becoming a colonised individual was an act of bribery. Further, the instigation was a social justice issue with acts to take individuals from their own land in order to be social human beings without a culture.

Public School Acts

Public Schools Acts up to and including the Act of 1948 included section 92(4) that stated Chinese, Japanese, and Indians were not entitled to vote at any school meeting (Mathias and Yabsley, 1991, p. 45). In this subjugated manner of defining the perimeters of social involvement, Aboriginal parents were conditioned to stand outside the education of their children, as were Chinese and Japanese peoples.

To add further insult, the 1952 Canada Elections Act specifically disqualified Indians from voting, "no Indian voices could be heard in the debates of Parliament or the Legislative Assembly because Indians were prohibited from voting" (Mathias & Yabsley, 1991, p. 44). The Act was repealed in 1960. Aboriginal people were political headaches to be addressed through the design of uni-lateral policy of political decision makers. Yet, Canada insisted on delineating First Nations rights as members who live on reserve and as Others who live off-reserve. Further, Canada continued to challenge the rights of Métis people.

The government's tactic today is to stall legal proceedings by wrangling over what is and is not relevant record, privacy considerations, and cabinet confidence about the truth of its activities in its relations with Aboriginal peoples. History reveals that it

does not matter which political party is in power. Through education, and legislative corrections, families of Aboriginal peoples were not able to engage in their education with purpose—to ensure their children were equipped with the knowledge required to participate in education no matter where they lived or chose to participate in mainstream society, without leaving their culture behind.

A backward mapping exercise revealed that the intent of the first treaty was carried forward into all the treaties. It is my understanding that the first relational agreement was embedded within the Two Row Wampum Belt for peaceful and clear minded people who were successfully applying concepts for relational knowledge for continuity of a good life. This good life was guided by Indigenous universal truths known *as the Great Law* and had become the connecting thread in the Elder knowledge of *Ohngwehonwe* and Anishnabe peoples but not accepted by the Settlers as a philosophy.

Social Movements of Protest

Participants of the Idle No More (n.d.) movement educated and challenged the existing rights, policies, and politics of all peoples who had concerns over what was happening to the land and its environment. The long standing issues entrenched in the treaties was the concern of the First People who understood the delicate relations between human beings and all that existed on Turtle Island.

Occupy Canada began in 2012 and *Idle No More* gained momentum when Attawapaskat Chief Theresa Spence began her hunger strike (CTVnews, 2012). She was hoping to bring awareness to the treatment of her community by the Conservative Government of Canada as not just affecting Aboriginal people but as having an impact on all Canadians in their relations to the land as a living entity. Harper's reaction to Spence's

request was to ignore her camp on the grounds next to the Parliament buildings. The response from some well-known public figures was to return Stephen Harper's awards (Campbell, 2013). Indigenous peoples understood that despite the disappointments, *the Great Law* was about co-existing relationships. Oren Lyons, *an Ohngwehonwe* Faithkeeper, and of the Turtle Clan, spoke to all nations on how to live in these times: "The Treaties are the last line of defense to protect water and lands from destruction**"**. He spoke about the job to change peoples' minds and values and to abide by nature's rules.

> It is what you do and how you live . . . build your principle on peace. Peace is health. Second principle is Equity and with that comes Justice. Third one is power – the power of the good mind, the power of one mind and give thanks. (Seven Gen Fund, 2010)

The resistance of the government to abide by nature's rules was transparent in the Omnibus Bill C-45 that claimed the overriding rights of the federal government to lands and resources.

> First Nations, have risen up in response to the replacement of the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA) of 1882 with the Navigation Protection Act (NPA) by Prime Minister Stephen Harper within omnibus bill C-45. This change effectively overrides native control over their own lands, enabling the government to allow industrialization, or mineral exploitation, on lands which treaties ceded to the native tribal leadership... The changes to the waterways law which began this wave of resistance was done in order to cater to large corporate interests who seek to exploit Canada's natural resources for private gain. (Downes, 2013, para. 1)

While these movements inspired people to become more aware of government steps to control the land and resources for corporate goals, it raised some longstanding issues concerning the relationships amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Colonial attitudes of racism and ignorance presented itself as a challenge on the part of Aboriginal peoples to retain original understandings about Peace and Harmony as more than a symbiotic understanding of the Two Row Wampum. Such were the implications for Aboriginal peoples whenever they sought to raise awareness of their rights to challenge the colonial status quo imposed upon their lands.

After much concentrated work to educate and advocate for recognition in the 1970s with *the Indian Control of Education* document and the *American Indian Movement* [AIM] movement and now *Occupy Canada*, *Idle No More* and the hunger strike by Chief Spence, racism and ignorance was still overt. Racism was still alive and allowed as was evidenced in the comments section of every news story concerning activist moments in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. The reactions of the public toward Aboriginal peoples suggested bullying tactics to initiate civil war rather than peaceful approaches to understanding the situation.

Discussion of Education Policy

The ideas of "knowing is not enough" is a theme introduced by Tyson and Ball (2012) for the American Educational Research Association Conference of 2012. I attended the conference and saw how the significance of those words stretched over those research methodologies wrapped in Western knowledge and reached out to Indigenous academics for action and answers to questions to include Aboriginal perspectives for their education. Such responses could include cultural conundrums of understandings about

relationship building, partnerships, and particularly about meanings concerning ethical space. Such examples were wrested from an examination of the provincial education policies.

Something was missing in the classrooms when Aboriginal students were not claiming parallel success with their non-Aboriginal peers in transitioning from publicly funded secondary schools into careers, trades, and higher education. As a First Nation person who experienced off-reserve public schooling and was exposed, fortunately, to Elder knowledge outside the classroom, a central question evolved: How might Aboriginal Elders be accommodated within the school classroom?

One of the struggles at the cultural divide was to determine who had authority to teach. The expectation for the education of Aboriginal peoples was political and cultural but their relationships with their educators lacked the criteria for social advancement and entry into capital enterprises. The subject of influences within any one geographical boundary as it pertains to Aboriginal people and how it defines their identity is limited. The OME (2007b) indicated there is a lack of awareness and knowledge amongst teachers about Aboriginal students, such as learning needs, histories, and perspectives, all of which contribute to Aboriginal definitions of student success:

> Factors that contribute to student success include teaching strategies that are appropriate to Aboriginal learner needs . . . a school environment that encourages Aboriginal student and parent engagement. . . . It is essential that First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students are engaged and feel welcome in school, and that they see themselves and their cultures in the curriculum and the school community. (p. 6)

There were statements of concern such as the ongoing disconnect between school and home, second level services, such as the Integrated Education Plan (IEP), and support workers in schools, such as special education services to include First Nations.

The arguments for additional Aboriginal student support were clear: students were not graduating from high school in large numbers. In 2009, Levin admitted that Aboriginal education still needed work: "In 2006 nearly 40% of Aboriginal people in Canada had not completed secondary school, compared with just over 20% of the total population" (p. 689). However, "the proportion of Aboriginal people who are high school graduates has grown from 54% to 66% in the last decade" (p. 689). I suggest that every school that could express success, such as 80% of their Aboriginal students were graduating high school, would signal a new age of parity and equality. However, the policies of the schools limited their reports of success to self-identified students and this created an unknown gap within the Aboriginal population.

Levin (2009) predicted publicly funded schools would contact Aboriginal communities more directly in the future. The OME (2007b) First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework directed local school boards and schools to do so. It made sense that more focus be spent on inserting Aboriginal supports and strategies on a quick and timely cycle into the education system at the same time as the First Nations were asserting their jurisdiction of education. The *Red Paper Policy* (NIB, 1972) projected: "Where there are Indian people in attendance at a school, the number of Indian staff hired, including professional, para-professional, clerical and janitorial, should be based on a minimum ratio of one Indian staff person to every 20 Indian students" (p. 24). The 2012 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario indicated there were 52,400

Aboriginal students enrolled in provincial schools during the 2010/2011 school year. The greater number of First Nations students (27,765) and Metís (18,245) were living off reserve (OAG, 2012, p. 130). If this data were used to determine the need for numbers of Aboriginal staff in high schools, perhaps, the visibility of 2,620 Aboriginal peoples on staff in their public high schools would make a difference in how students see themselves within their school environment.

It was discouraging that on the basis of seniority hiring policies, the experienced, provincially trained, and federally funded Aboriginal teachers seeking to enter the public school system had to wait for an opening that would give them an opportunity to gain seniority status. Visibility of Aboriginal professionals and their allies in the school system is crucial to influencing change within any institution but policy incentives to progress this sensibility was limited. What policies exist to determine whether Aboriginal Elders can be embraced within the school system?

The OME (2007c) released an update to its Policy/Memorandum 128 that addressed the notion that local Aboriginal Elders are to be consulted by local school boards and local schools. Upon further examination, however, the roles of Elders in publicly funded school classrooms were limited through the design of its policy.

Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 128 stated that school boards are to consult Aboriginal Elders along with other Aboriginal community members about codes of conduct reviews (OME, 2007c, pp. 6-7) and as partnership initiatives such as “to deliver prevention or intervention programs” (OME, 2007c, p. 7). There were, however, particular protocols in the system for their application as explained in PPM No. 147 with reference to Ontario Regulation 142/08 Letter of Permission (OME, 2008) that resists

nonprofessional involvement in its Euro-Western interpretation. Any partnership conceived could be conducted only in recognition of what was already established. "Protocols are effective ways of establishing linkages between boards and community agencies and of formalizing the relationship between them. These partnerships must respect all applicable collective agreements" (OME, 2007c, p. 7). The assumption that the system of normal education was developed without the input of Aboriginal peoples to include recognition of their Aboriginal Knowledge Holders was obvious. Aboriginal Elders were not enabled to teach in the public school system without an Ontario Teaching Certificate unless they qualified under Letters of Permission (PPM 147, OME, 2008). Further, it was expected that an individual possess a high school diploma before applying to fill a position in public schools. In Aboriginal society, Elders are recognized as Teachers, with authority to educate (McNally, 2009; RCAP, 1996) and nurture community morality (Brant-Castellano, Davis, Lahache, 2000). The implication at the cultural divide is Aboriginal Elder status should not be judged by provincial academic progress.

Through a critical lens, I examined Aboriginal stories in education. My Indigenous perspective was that story is research and stories need to be told in many ways. Stories told at the cultural divide revealed progress of relationships across cultures. In the case of historical story, Canada's Aboriginal people experienced legislated acts of oppression, with intentions to control them to the margins with a widening colonial grip on Aboriginal land while instituting laws, legislation, politics, economics and policies without Aboriginal involvement. Poole's (1972) concepts of ethical space contained a

logical approach for simultaneously approaching and inviting cultural discussions for transformations in education.

A reconstruction of the history of relations in education from an Aboriginal perspective was at first agreeable. The Dutch appeared to be agreeable to the terms set in the Two Row Wampum Belt. Over time, as the colonists' government discovered the abundance of resources, the relationship between Aboriginal and Settler peoples deteriorated, and so did the equality of cultural needs and expectations in public education. Despite the negative experiences, Aboriginal peoples maintained their peaceful positions according to the terms of the Two Row Wampum Belt, with steadfast belief that the *Eighth Fire* must be lit without inciting a civil war. The terms for understanding peaceful concepts during protests might be conscious or unconscious but Aboriginal protests were carrying on under the direction of Aboriginal Elders. This next section uncovers stories of classrooms in other provinces for support of Aboriginal Elders but begins with an allusion to transformational work.

Fleshing Out Success

A step in the preparation of an animal hide or skin towards its transformation into a useful, aesthetic item required the careful removal of fatty tissue and flesh. This step was called fleshing. Once this step was complete, the hide could undergo another step to remove the hair in order to make drums. Smoking the hides further prepared the skin to be useful in making clothing and moccasins. Fleshing required purpose, patience, and determination. This work was one of transformation.

At the heart of this section was a question: In what ways might Aboriginal Elders influence transformations in a classroom setting for Aboriginal student success with

Aboriginal culture and identity intact? There were a number of resources that referenced how schools could participate in activities to incorporate Elder knowledge. Assistance to schools on developing policies and guidelines to initiate programs involving Elders was available from Community Education, Saskatchewan Education (2001). Curriculum models were designed by educators such as Janvier and Mohan (2003), to guide teachers in projects to engage students with Elders.

The success of the Elders in Residence program by Goulet et al. (2009) suggested, "schools have Aboriginal education goals in place, including an outline of their plans on how they hoped to achieve those goals." They cited Favel and Racette's (2009) definition on the role of Elders: "To enact Indigenous worldviews and imbed Indigenous philosophies and cultural values in the schools, connect with students and build community relationships, assist teachers in implementing Indigenous content, and provide instructional support in Indigenous education to school staffs" (p. 6). There appeared to be agreement of Elder roles as the glue that connected youth to their community and the well-being of community. It seemed sensible to acknowledge Elder roles and institute their roles as an Aboriginal designed contribution in the education system. Several conundrums associated with Aboriginal student achievements in education were addressed.

Normalcy of Aboriginal Knowledge and Epistemology Through Modelling

Haig-Brown (2008) suggested that curriculum infused with Aboriginal knowledge and epistemology had the "potential to reframe and decentre" conventional scholarship and Canadian curricula" (p. 13). The Asokan study (Goulet, et al., 2009) revealed teachers' experiences and perceptions of their relationships and those of their students on

the roles of the Elders *in Residence Program.* Teachers sought "ways to integrate their [Elder] expertise into the normal functioning of the school classroom" (p. 2). Lafrance's (2000) study of a First Nations school indicated a level of normalcy when Aboriginal Elders contributed to the design and delivery of curriculum as an informal and experiential process. The presence of an Elder in the classroom offered a sense of normalcy and provided a cultural figure that modelled their cultural expectations for success.

In British Columbia, Aboriginal peoples determined their involvement of Aboriginal Elders in curriculum they called Power of Place (PoP; Graham & Ireland, 2008). The indication was that initiatives to integrate Indigenous Knowledge into school curriculum and pedagogy required a series of tasks

- Make space for Elders and resource people,
- Lay the foundation of relations and resources and
- Plan for ongoing integration work (Graham & Ireland, 2008, p. 5).

The Power of Place study indicated that it required a longer period of time to enable in-depth focus on concrete results in order to determine educational change, integration of recommendations into policy and school plans, and the impact of change on teacher practice and student learning with the application of updated and en-cultured curriculum in the Lilloet schools from K-12. The study did not offer specific insights on the impact of Aboriginal Elders as professional resources with teachers in the publicly funded school classroom. The study did not indicate funding as a source of power and how that power might be shared with Aboriginal community, schools, school boards, and Elders.

The PoP study suggested the need for "cultural immersion camps for teachers" or an "Elder and Resource Person Academy" (Graham & Ireland, 2008, p. 4) with support and training and as aligned with a research team for further study. It indicated the possibility that Elders might become more involved in the public school system with additional training.

This researcher's struggle in Ontario was how to establish concrete findings that concur with PoP recommendations to initiate a policy cycle that would authentically involve the subjective concerns of Aboriginal peoples at the local school board and local school level in the development of strategic plans and guidelines "for developing more culturally responsive schools" (Graham & Ireland, 2008, p. 4). The Ontario Ministry of Education First Nations (2007b), Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework focused on the objectives of the institution and its terms for success as avenues for the development of strategies. Coburn (2005) revealed how policies are transmitted through a hierarchal system and interpreted at various levels for eventual application in the local classroom. Poole (1972) wrote that cultural concerns were treated as subjective, outside the system, and, therefore, ignored.

It was understood by Aboriginal peoples that place of power began in one's own community. Through the *Indian Act*, Aboriginal peoples were conditioned and controlled on a daily basis as experiments in assimilation tactics. Knowledge of place existed in the experiences and generational stories of Aboriginal Elders. It was important that Knowledge Holders were enabled to share their observations of life, land, and human beings for the benefit and success of both Original Peoples and Newcomers. The first place of learning was the geographical landscape with its resources, economy, and laws

for relational living. Aboriginal Elders needed encouragement to speak about the past and how that was important knowledge for the present so that students could build confidence to meet the future with support of their choice to leave their community or not.

Relationships and Unresolved Tensions

The relational tensions between Aboriginal peoples and government were evident in policy statements, and pedagogical designs in public and higher education, and this was problematic. The causal factors that affected educational outcomes for Aboriginal students were complex and challenged existing power structures within education settings as political discourses denied Aboriginal capacity building.

The *Red Paper Policy* (NIB, 1972) in response to the government's assimilation White Paper Policy 1969 (AANDC, n.d. b), was accepted, but not implemented. The RCAP (1996) referred to the way Aboriginal people were educated and reviewed the ethics and protocols for conducting research amongst Aboriginal peoples. Their recommendations were not implemented. The process of dealing with Aboriginal peoples appeared to maintain a bigoted stance. A study by Howlett (1994) concluded that government-native policy development was in a period of contestation before institutionalization. L. T. Smith (1999), a Maori researcher and educator, described the impact of the West as attempts of acculturation, assimilation, and then reinvention of Indigenous Peoples as a hybrid ethnic culture. The goal was to defeat Aboriginal people by ignoring them.

The Relationship Dilemma – Teachers and Elders

According to the 2001 census, teachers who identified as Aboriginal made up .8% of all elementary-secondary teachers in Ontario while 2.6 % of the 6-19-year-old students

self-identified as Aboriginal (CTF, 2007). It was 154 years since 1847 when the first Normal School was established. The 2001 census data demonstrated evidence of the limited extent of Aboriginal involvement in the teaching enterprise. It was highly suspected that there was a correlation between the low numbers of Aboriginal teachers and the low numbers of Aboriginal high school student graduates. It was clear that Aboriginal student academic success was further exasperated by the lack of connection between teacher and culture in the classroom. Aboriginal student academic success hinged on their ability to be self-fulfilling, and confident individuals fully entrenched in their cultural knowledge and cognizant of the society that employed their services in whatever capacity they aspired after secondary school. Successful curriculum engaged Aboriginal students and encouraged transformative modelling acts by teachers who were interested in the relational dilemmas of their students (Kanu, 2005).

The request for Aboriginal Elders and knowledge was argued as a beneficial intergenerational link for academic success. Research results indicated there was a cultural gap in relationships with Aboriginal Elders. This signalled a missing link in arrangements for curriculum design and delivery. Towards this regard, Bougie (2009) indicated that Elders held an important place in the cultural life of off-reserve students between the ages of 6-14:

> 42% of younger children spent time with Elders at least once a week, compared with 36% of older children. The proportion of First Nations children spending time with Elders at least once a week was higher in rural (46%) than in urban (37%) settings. This proportion was also higher in the Territories (54%) than in Ontario (40%), British Columbia (38%), and the Prairies (36%). (p. 26)

Bougie's data revealed the deteriorating impact of relational time with Elders and Aboriginal students in correlation with the length of time spent in the provincial education system. Faries (2009) noted that, "if the children's culture is not part of the school curriculum, then eventually they get the message that their culture is not important and is inferior" (p. 5). Elders were the cultural Knowledge Holders.

Partnerships with Aboriginal communities, families, and parents in educating Aboriginal students towards academic success was about strategies that involved their people, their culture, their language, their land, their identity, their heritage, and their stories. Was it possible to bridge cultures, and support co-creation of new knowledge from Aboriginal and Settler cultures for the benefit of all students? Interpretations in research, such as that done by Bougie (2009), argued that Elders in the life of Aboriginal students might be conducive for student success. There was no data to suggest that placement of Elders in positions as professional resources to work alongside teachers in the public school classrooms was a successful intervention. Such study of policy discourse across cultures would assist in resolving the differential in discussions about classroom outcomes and Aboriginal community expectations. This cultural practice for student success has yet to be explored.

CHAPTER FIVE: ABORIGINAL STORY AS RESEARCH METHOD

"It is our opinion that one of the most fundamental principles of Aboriginal research methodology is the necessity for the researcher to locate him or herself" (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 99). Kovach (2009) advised that Indigenous researchers begin their work by 'placing themselves' for very specific reasons. Chase (2005) acknowledged that understandings of knowing how to place oneself at the center of a life story was global and perhaps brought about as necessary for the "relationship between Western and non-Western narrative theories and practices" (p. 670). A review of the array of Indigenous researchers and research concerned with education suggested that the undercurrents are being brought to surface for the attention of the institution. I located myself in this study in order to problematize the obstacles for placing Aboriginal Elders in classrooms as professional resources. In coming to that point, I had to understand my own family stories and, most importantly, the stories connected to my Ojibwa heritage.

Brayboy (2005) spoke of Aboriginal theory as story and named that theory as Tribal Critical Theory (Tribal Crit) as Indigenous story included the colonizers' stories of racism, elitism, and power (Alfred, 1999; Battiste, 1993, 2004; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Aboriginal scholars confirmed that colonizers sought to eliminate Aboriginal stories through language shifts, removal of children, institutional control over the schooling of children, (Chrisjohn & Young, 2006; Miller, 1996) and control of the resources of the land, water, and minerals (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; L. T. Smith, 1999). This control had a history. It was manifested through government Acts, legislation, and policies, delivered by Indian Agents, enforced by the RCMP and Indian and Northern Affairs Department bureaucrats. Indelibly, control intersected every aspect

of the lives of Aboriginal peoples and that was impacting the education of Aboriginal students (RCAP, 1996). Through education, Aboriginal peoples were marginalized. Education was used clearly and with purpose, and with neglect to address Aboriginal student needs. Further, the story of joint control for the education of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people prior to the policies that designed residential schools, was not a popular discourse. The success of education as Indian controlled was not an academic or fiscal exercise (Jamieson, 1987; MacLean, 2002; D. B. Smith, 1987).

I believed the researcher must go beyond telling the colonized story at the cultural divide. There had to be collective action so that new theories would evolve to advocate for transformative changes within institutions. I envisioned a cross-cultural Aboriginal designed and delivered study with an exploratory mixed methods design (qualitative and quantitative). The study was to be conducted in stages to gather information using before and after interviews of participants in a classroom. An Aboriginal Elder would work alongside a teacher. I hoped to gain the participation of a maximum of four schools. This would permit an exploration of approaches to place Aboriginal Elders in local classrooms as partners. I believed a participatory case study approach would be a suitable ethical approach to explore the relationship between Aboriginal Elders and teachers in the publicly funded classroom. I designed my proposal within the guidelines of an Aboriginal traditional problem-solving process. It was intended to address ideas of vision, relationships, knowledge, and action while maintaining needs for balance in the realms of physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional states. I thought such a design might address the protocols and processes of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal involvement. I hoped to create a study to explore the objectivities of the institution and explore the values and

beliefs of Aboriginal community towards placing Aboriginal Elders in the school classroom.

Aboriginal scholars knew that to create the important discursive practices or conversations that would help in studying Aboriginal worlds in meaningful and enduring ways, they must consider diverse approaches to research that would address the complex worlds inhabited by Aboriginal people (Kenny, 2004, p. 17). If the Aboriginal world was considered complex, I hoped to draw attention to it by offering invitations to participate through the steps of my Indigenous designed study.

As a First Nations Aboriginal person born into the Ojibwa and Iroquois cultures, I sought to describe my work in education as based on a theoretical framework that concerned ethical space and explored relationships when two cultures met. With an Indigenous critical lens designed with the Two Row Wampum Belt knowledge, my intent was to use Poole's (1972) ethical space theory framework to flesh out "underpinnings of need" that might argue for further placement of Aboriginal Elders into the publicly funded school classroom. But first, I needed a venue to speak with the Teachers. The results were a continuum of acceptance, silence, complications, and then rejection.

Method

At the time of this study I was not living in the geographic locale, but travelled to appointments and schedules designed through emails and telephone calls over the course of four years. I completed my literature review and used the Anishnaabe story of the Seven Stages of Life to relate the current segment of my place and time as a method to demonstrate the cross-cultural nuances of aging. I worked out my personal story to share my place on the land and relationships within the two nations of my birth. I recalled the

stories that were told to me and I dug deeper to search for the landmarks in those stories so I could connect with the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members within the geographic locals of the two school boards.

The story about Aboriginal Elders traced the rights, politics, and policies that disconnected opportunities for the integration of Aboriginal Elders into publicly funded secondary school classrooms as educators. I approached my arguments with meta-physical symbolic points of references within ethical space as a potential framework between the Two Rows of the storied, and esteemed purple and white coloured Wampum Belt. I examined the many layers of inequalities in the education of Indigenous peoples that were addressed through the telling of their stories. There was a deteriorating relationship between two solitudes that began more than 500 years ago. Stories about Aboriginal Elders as educators and holders of knowledge were not studied in education.

I worked on arguments to express the necessity to decolonize and indigenize the publicly funded secondary school classroom with Aboriginal Elder and Aboriginal community involvement. I ordered my arguments by responding to three main questions:

- What are the values, beliefs, and assumptions surrounding Aboriginal Elders as professional resources?
- What barriers of policies and politics will need to be overcome to effect this policy intervention?
- How might Aboriginal Elders in the public school classroom impact Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes?

I used a critical lens to examine pedagogy, and referred to Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Crit Theory. I drew from Coburn's (2005) theory as a formula to understand systemic

correlations between teachers, policy, and classroom outcomes in public schools. I relied on guidance from Koch (1998) to journal my experience into a narrative story. I studied Mason's (2008) story. Ultimately, it was the cross-cultural story in the publicly funded provincial education system that was included in the analysis of this study.

Signs of Acceptance - The Conversations That Informed the Study

In November 2009, I began conversations with various education stakeholders about having Aboriginal Elders in the classroom. Two school board superintendents invited me to attend meetings with Aboriginal Focus Groups and Aboriginal Education Committees that included the teachers, principals, superintendents, and Aboriginal community leaders and members of the schools and school boards during the early spring of 2010. At these meetings I was offered an opportunity to share what I knew about the concepts of ethical space in education. It was at these meetings that I first presented the idea of placing Aboriginal Elders in classrooms with the intention of gathering their feedback during this process. Support for the project was tentatively verbalized at the meetings.

I visited First Nation Education Managers and Directors within the two school board districts. In the manner of giving support, I was given a gift of tobacco and a small item by one First Nation Education Director and asked not to give up on my task. I took confidence in designing the method I would use for the study.

I hoped to add another layer of knowledge to the ethical space at a secondary school level. A letter from two school board superintendents acknowledged the intent of the study and offered their support to proceed to determine the placement of an Aboriginal Elder in their district school board classrooms. The two school board

superintendents recognized my previous work to demonstrate the need for ethical space. There was an air of anticipation for what the results might reveal. I felt relieved and assured that I was accomplishing goals in research that involved ethical space as articulated by Ermine, Sinclair, and Jeffery (2004),

> Aboriginal cross-cultural research must seek to engage forces to address the relational gap in colonial institutions and confront existing relations of power. The concept of the ethical space provides a venue within which to articulate the possibilities and challenges of bringing together different ways of coming to knowledge and applying this theory to the practice of research. (p. 16)

The ideal conceptual approach for this study appeared to be participatory research as an engagement strategy for this study. I believed the school board administration and myself were optimistic that a teacher and a classroom would be easily found and the study of ethical space would be invaluable for demonstrating progress within the OME (2007b) First Nations, Metís, and Inuit Education Policy Framework.

Redirection and Modifying

I was overly optimistic about my design for research that took a multiple case study approach to explore convergent and divergent data. The study did not unfold as anticipated. A backward review determined that although protocol was followed to gain permission to conduct research within the school boards, it was the teachers and their supervisors who made the ultimate decision according to their policies. I pondered over the change of events. The study came to an unexpected halt before any data was gathered from the volunteer participants who might have been involved in the classroom. It was expected that any party might decide not to be involved and that decision must be

accepted. A study could end upon the will of the parties and their reason could be private. An alternate plan was put into place to submit a modified study and conduct interviews. However, the steps that were taken to implement the original plan had value and I did journal the sequence of events. Despite feeling disappointment, I saw the value of my work as an aspect of being a researcher. It was through the process that I learned more about myself and the power, language, and intents of the education system.

One school declined to participate after a series of productive meetings and correspondence between October 2010 and June 2011. School Board B supervisor submitted a proposal to compensate Teacher time and for an Aboriginal Elder's time. The proposed funds announced in the early second semester were expected to be expended by the end of the 2011/2012 school's timeframe. By the time a volunteer teacher came forward to participate in May 2012, the school year was near the exam timetable. I determined that the classroom experience for the study needed to begin in September, at the beginning of the school year. The process and the funding schedule were not designed to simultaneously support the study's timeframe. Although the participants who were involved in the process were disappointed, they offered their assistance to conduct the study at another time.

I reviewed my work and determined it had value for designing another study. Upon the recommendation of my committee, I redirected my study to gather interviews from participants who had experiences in the publicly funded secondary school classroom.

Silences

The air was heavy with silences during the process of locating school classrooms. During my conversations with prospective participants, there were many silences and I sensed there were issues best not discussed during the research timeframe. The content of some discussions were political and I respected the need for confidentiality. The divisions amongst the different Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parties were sharp, historical, and political, but not entirely of their making. I surmised the ground and the time for my study was not yet ready.

Assumptions

Marshall and Batten (2003) discussed the importance of cross-cultural studies and the expectations that research findings would benefit all cultures involved. I hoped this study might pay tribute to Aboriginal Elders, to acknowledge their rightful place as educators, and offer data to mitigate the conflicts of their place in colonial history. I framed my literature review as discussions of culturally compounding issues at the cultural divide that concerned Elders as teachers. I pondered whether the process of my study might have been handled differently. The individual subjective cultural story in education was hard pressed to address the objective merits at the cultural divide. Although my literature review focused on Elders, the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, teachers, and administrators of the publicly funded school classroom were also involved in this story as the timeline demonstrated how legislation would determine the education of First Nations, Metís, and Inuit peoples. Through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt, I was enabled to express ethical space as a storied theory of intertwining objectivities and subjectivities.

Authenticity

I used two sets of data before writing the results and analysis. One set of data was contained within my personal journal that recorded the process for placing Aboriginal Elders in the classroom. I presented these data as narrative story. The other set were two face-to-face interviews that explored the values and beliefs in placing Aboriginal Elders in the classroom. The first set of data represented the objectivities of the institution, while the second set represented the subjectivities of the Aboriginal culture confronted with the school culture. Each set of data informed the current state of ethical space in the publicly funded classroom.

I received approval to proceed with my study to gather data by the Brock University Research Ethics Board in October 2011 under File # 10-224. Their Aboriginal Research Advisory Council scrutinized it. I later applied for an extension to conduct interviews outside the school classroom that ended in January 2014.

Data as Narrative Story

I reviewed my life experiences and my role as an Indigenous cross-cultural researcher through an Indigenous critical lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt with its existential concepts for co-existence. I felt prepared to approach the school institution to negotiate my way into the publicly funded classrooms of a specific geographic locale where there existed a predominant Ojibwa culture.

I journalled my reactions to conversations conducted through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and emails as I directed my energies to place an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom.

Koch (1998) determined that narrative story is the research product. In her work, she acknowledged that stories could:

- Show where professionals have gone wrong
- Be used in evaluating community development (Rappaport, 1993)
- Can inform social policy
- Can facilitate change in organizations (Gabriel, 1995, Yanow, 1995)
- Can allow marginalized groups to have a voice (Melina, 1992, Zinnecker, 1994, Bartlett & Font, 1994; Dean, 1995; Biddle, 1996; Turton, 1997)
- Can address diversity through understanding (Harvey, 1994; Debeljak, 1994; Kelly, 1996; Greene et al, 1996), etc. (p. 1183).

Koch (1998) expressed story as 'interpretative research" (p. 1183), as hermeneutic inquiry (p. 1184) that involved five interrelated areas: journaling, observing, listening, writing, and rigour (p. 1183). She notes that:

> Critics of hermeneutics or phenomenological approaches claim that story telling is not enough, the world is waiting to be transformed! I would say to these critics that change comes about indirectly, perhaps through working with research participants…or through the publication and presentation of the research. (p. 1185)

Koch advised, "hermeneutic inquiry is understanding, reconstruction, advocacy, and activism" (p. 1189). Clough (2000) "warned, however, that the "trauma culture" currently inhabited encouraged proliferation of personal narratives about trouble and suffering without offering a theory and politics of change" (as cited in Chase, 2005, pp. 669-670).

I reviewed the contents of my journal to see how I attempted to be objective, believing that it would be in the generation of facts that the truths of the situation would eventually lead to a satisfactory outcome for both cultures. I compared my conceptual understandings with other researchers having similar experiences. I reviewed the story of Aboriginal Elders and situated their place in education as having limited rights, and as enduring the swipes of policies and politics that circumvented their roles in Aboriginal community. I concluded that the interpretations and legislations of the status quo in Settler education complicates conjectured education in the lives of Aboriginal peoples.

My journal consisted of 111 pages of email history highlighted with scribbled notes and fifty-six pages of typed single lined notes and additional study of articles that were concurrently linked with the emails, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. My personal journal was a record of the steps and conclusions of my attempts to place an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. It noted the protocols and processes, ethics, institutional leaders, and decision makers who were contacted, and the task to locate Elders.

Protocol and Process

I contacted school superintendents who held the Aboriginal Education portfolios for high school students. Each School Board Superintendent contacted their Directors and Financial Administrators. The letters of support by the superintendents indicated the understanding that data would be collected once teachers were identified as willing participants. I handed these letters to the University Research Ethics Board.

Before interviewing First Nations community members, I intended to request letters of support from respective Band Councils once the teachers and their schools were

identified. Unfortunately, my study came to an end due to lack of teachers volunteering to participate by the end of the 2012 school year. I submitted my report to the Ethics committee referring to the lack of participant volunteers to complete the study. Upon the recommendation of a committee member, I requested a modification and extended the study in order to gather data from volunteer respondents between November 2013 and January 2014

Institutional Leaders and Decision Makers

To maintain confidentiality, my contacts were identified with School Board A or School Board B. The School Board Superintendents were from two different school boards. Their directives were each different, but contact between me and their Aboriginal liaison staff along with the principals of their schools appeared friendly. The draft research packages contained letters to the principals to request their involvement and their assistance to identify teachers who might be interested. They were given a draft survey and questions for teacher responses. School Board A Superintendent and Principal were helpful in suggesting changes to the design of items in the package. School Board B Superintendent indicated agreement with the content of the package and submitted a proposal for funding to accommodate an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom.

Cross-cultural relationships between Aboriginal peoples, the local school, and local school board were important indicators towards a successful research study. A description of the leaders and decision makers I met with were as follows:

1. Two *Boards of Education and Two Superintendents*: With the help of superintendents, I was directed on the protocols and processes of submitting my proposal in order to reach the teacher in the classroom

2. Three *Publicly Funded Secondary School Principals*: Individual teachers cannot respond to researchers without their supervisor's approval. I wrote a sample letter to the principals that outlined my intent and suggested a process for contacting the teachers who might come forward
3. Four *Publicly Funded Secondary School Teachers*: The teachers were responsible to their supervisors and parents with regard to activity in the classroom. Any changes to their regular duties would come to the attention of their unions.
4. Seven *First Nations Aboriginal Education Directors and Managers.* During my study it was clear that formal written responses or direction from Aboriginal Directors and Managers would not be forthcoming despite research that might include their community student members. I assumed that once the local schools indicated willingness to participate, they would provide me with direction on how to contact their community members. However, they were interested in my progress to invite the local schools to participate in the study. I requested Aboriginal Directors and Managers to review my proposal, determine if the community might be involved, and direct me when and how to correspond with Band Council. No First Nation Director or Manager responded to that request. One First Nations Director advised me that if the proposal fit the education mandate of the community, it would be considered. I interpreted the silence to be negative to my request. An alternate response was from one First Nation Director, outside the intended

geographical area of study, who contacted me by email for more information by a due date for consideration by the Band Council.

5. Two *Aboriginal Lead/Special Assignment Teachers*: Two Aboriginal Teachers assigned as emissaries between the local schools and Aboriginal communities within each of their school board, were directed by their supervisors on how to respond to my requests for assistance. They were funded though provincial initiatives. Through these two individuals I learned and was directed through the internal protocols and processes within the school boards and schools. However, as one Aboriginal Teacher disclosed, they were not free to disclose their personal thoughts, beliefs, and ideas concerning the study. While School Board A Aboriginal Lead/Special Needs teacher would need the permission of a Supervisor to participate and did not attend meetings with the Superintendent, the other was directed to work with me to bring the study to fruition and did attend several meetings with School Board B Superintendent.
6. One *First Nations' Elders Program Coordinator*. I corresponded with this individual to determine names of people who might best be contacted to discuss with me my intended research proposal. I spoke with one Elder who informed me of a project that was being worked on in the United States having similar implications to this study: Aboriginal Elders are qualified to work in a school classroom. Unfortunately, due to that Elder*'s* busy schedule, we were unable to connect again. I was guided towards making other connections with groups of Elders in the geographic local. Despite my efforts, I was not contacted by other groups of Elders.

7. One *Aboriginal Education Officer*. I submitted a copy of my proposal for review, hoping to receive direction, suggestions, and advice. By the end of the study, we still did not connect. The Education Officer did indicate a schedule that was very full.

Due to differing schedules, it was difficult to identify a date for all parties to gather in one place to address my research proposal. I met with First Nations Education Directors and Managers associated with one local school in July 2011. All First Nations Education Directors and Managers associated with the two school boards met in December 2011. I was invited to that meeting to give updates. Due to circumstances beyond my control, I was unable to attend Aboriginal Education committee meetings or focus groups led by the school boards. I was not invited to make further presentations such as progress. I did not receive minutes of those meetings.

Locating Elders

The study did not fail for lack of identification of an Aboriginal Elder who might be involved: representatives within both school boards brought forth names of individuals who might be eligible candidates for the study. However, the First Nations Education Directors did not submit names for me to contact their community Elders. A Tribal Program Manager who was working with Elders provided me names and email addresses. One individual responded. I made contact with this community Elder, who spoke both an Ojibwa and Odawa dialect fluently; however, this individual was in so much demand, that travel and calls to assist in other projects precluded her involvement. This Elder was involved in a project in a U.S. state that recognized Aboriginal Elders as educators in the college system and was determining their status in their public system

but I was not successful in gaining her attention to continue correspondence. I later learned of differences within communities as to how they identify Elders. Although this individual was married to a band member in the area, she was identified as being from a different community and not fully recognized as their Elder.

In June 2012 I learned that one First Nations group of Elders were being interviewed for a different study. They declined my offer to make a presentation to them. From other community members I learned that there were so few Elders that perhaps they were already quite busy.

In District School Board B, the lead teacher and I did agree on an Elder who we determined was quite qualified to fulfill the role of Elder in the classroom for this study and whom we were confident would put any teacher at ease. We discussed two more names and decided to meet with them as soon as we were sure the teachers were identified.

Questions

Two sets of questions were designed. One set of general questions would be used to gather the values, beliefs, and assumptions of participants. Another set of questions was designed to gauge the experiences of those in the classroom. When the study did not unfold as anticipated, the general set of questions were used to explore two community member responses.

General Questions

I casually sat in conversation after a traditional meal, with five knowledgeable Aboriginal grandmas and grandpas, who were from various educational environments. They were of different clans and were of different cultural origin throughout Ontario.

They learned from Aboriginal Elders in their lifetimes, understood universal concepts of Indigenous rights, and discussed their vision of constructs for Aboriginal student academic success in the public secondary school. They directed me in the design of semistructured questions regarding teachers and Elders in the classroom after listening to my talk on ethical space and vision to one day see Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded classroom to work alongside teachers. Those questions were designed for Aboriginal Talking Circles that would have included students, teachers, and Elders in their respective focus groups and then a mix of the groups with intentions to share across culture. The varied responses and subsequent redesign during the process of delivering the research proposal to the schools was included in the analysis without identifying the involved parties. (See Appendix B for these Questions and the set revised by a Principal and Superintendent). This same set of open-ended questions, including the addition of the revised questions, was used in the face-to-face interviews.

Pre- and Post-Survey Questions

I designed a pre- and post-survey instrument for teachers, principals, and community members and two sets of questions: one for individual responses by a teacher and Elder in the classroom and another that would involve the teachers, Elders, and students in a Talking Circle. The teachers, principals, and superintendents of both school boards, and First Nations Directors and Managers received copies of the packages that contained the surveys and general questions. I was prepared to post the survey and general questions through the Internet using either the tool Survey Monkey or Fluid. No teacher, principal, Aboriginal Elder, or community member responded to this set of

surveys and general questions as the schools were not able to place an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom within the anticipated timeframe.

Face-to-Face Interviews

I conducted interviews with Indigenous peoples through face-to-face dialogue. This method enabled me to be empathetic with them when they spoke of their experiences with oppression. Poole (1972) referred to violent acts against humanity as "the destruction of meaning" (p. 40). Aboriginal peoples were the focus of such destruction. The reserves and residential schools were spaces in which they were contained to carry out policies for annihilation and then assimilation. Poole (1972) offered a description of an outcome as being unable to think when ethical space was destroyed:

> The result is that more and more people, when interviewed, express themselves as unable *to think the situation through*. They are unable to *think* what the outcome can be, they can *see* no solution. The situation has become literally un-thinkable. The destruction of ethical space is itself the destruction of the very possibility of thought. (p. 40)

When Aboriginal Elders were dismissed by the education system as Knowledge Holders with rights to teach, the frontline of belief in what it means to become an Elder was also destroyed. The task of conducting interviews in this geographical location was to gather volunteer participants to reveal their thoughts about Aboriginal Elders in the classroom and this would include exposing their values and beliefs.

Volunteer participants were sought after the approval for a modified study. The volunteer participants were given an information package that detailed anonymity, and

accountability issues. In their letters, they were advised they might be interviewed through Skype by phone or in a face-to-face-interview. Two participants chose face-to-face. One other participant who responded requested a Skype interview but did not commit to the date arranged and did not respond to a request for an alternate date.

Volunteer Participants

Identifying and contacting volunteer participants proved to be difficult. There were a number of staff changeovers and three of my initial contacts could not be located. One Aboriginal employee in the publicly funded school system felt that due to fears for continuing employment, it was not a good time to participate in the research, as those views might not coincide with the goals of the system. This individual claimed to have been reprimanded in the past for expressing personal views. Two other Aboriginal employees did not respond to emails or telephone messages. Another Aboriginal employee did not at first respond to emails but did indicate interest through a telephone call. The information was sent via email and the respondent promised to get back to me within a few days. A week went by and I sent a reminder email to which an apology was sent stating that responses to the questions required quality time that could not be given as there was an overload of work. Several parents were contacted, received the questions, but none felt they could respond as they were busy with children, jobs, and school. In the end, I interviewed two volunteer participants who requested I send information through their emails. After several reminders by each, arrangements were made to conduct the interviews in January. This researcher travelled to meet and record volunteer participants in the location of their choice.

Both participants requested to be interviewed in their homes. Both participants expressed they led busy lives but were committed to giving the 3 hours of time to participate. A gift of a medicine bag beaded with the symbol of the Two Row Wampum Belt was provided along with a feedback letter and their transcript after the interviews.

Information Package

Participants were not offered financial compensation. The information package explained that it would take them up to an hour to review the questions and prepare their responses to an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. Responses to their transcript took up another hour of their time. The Volunteer respondents were informed of their rights in research, the risks and benefits, and that the data would be presented at conferences and other educational venues. A consent form was included.

Recording

The recording of interviews began with statements about the consent form with participants acknowledging their understanding of it through verbal statements. Each participant was given a consent form in their interview packages and was able to refer to it during the interview. Participants were informed in advance of their rights to participate through a recorded interview. They had the right to ask that the recorder be turned on or off. I informed them when the recorder was turned on and when it was turned off. They were informed that they could take a break at any time. I recorded the interviews through my iPhone, which requires a password, and made a copy in a computer that also required a password. As soon as the transcriptions were approved, the recorded interviews were erased from both iPhone and computer.

Accountability

It was explained in letters of information that this study was exploratory to gain a perspective of the values and beliefs of Aboriginal peoples about placing Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded school classroom. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured prior to the interviews. Participant words were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Neither participant requested a translator and their completed transcripts were mailed along with a prepaid envelope. Participants were informed they could contact me by phone or email to ask questions, request more information, or discuss any portion of the study. One participant corresponded with me through the social media of Facebook and then by email concerning the details of the study before and after the interview. I had located her by searching the social media Facebook. It was through Facebook that she informed me that she was satisfied with the transcript as it was but she agreed to return it with the self-mailed envelope I had provided. Both respondents requested that certain forms of speech like “you know” and “like” be removed when they were quoted. Both participants indicated their confidence in this researcher’s ability to use their words appropriately.

Anonymity

Participants chose the location for their interviews in their homes. Anonymity was not complete as there were interruptions in both interviews so others were aware there was a conversation. Both participants chose their pseudonym names to be used in their transcripts and each transcript was labelled as confidential both outside their mailed enveloped and inside each transcript page.

Both participants were female. Although one did not hesitate to request her name be used, university research ethics advises against it. An alternate pseudonym name was given for the final report. Neither participant expressed concern that their identification as First Nations people might evoke negative responses to race, but rather, they were supportive that their voices were heard and they were included in the study.

Analysis

Poole (1972) described ethical space as what happens when two cultures meet at the cultural divide. “The destruction of ethical space is itself the destruction of the very possibility of thought” (Poole, 1972, p. 40). Although my study did not progress into the anticipated stage of placing an Aboriginal Elder into the classroom, my presentation of the enterprise was an act to describe the current context of ethical space in one geographical locale. I realize that in the process of presenting myself to the publicly funded school administrators, I was experiencing the gaze of Pool’s (1972) institutional objectivities. It was an uncomfortable moment to be at first seen as an Indigenous person confronting the school system with a subjective initiative. I did not arrive in the geographic location with a plan to turn the school system upside down but to present the subjective voice to offer a better relational solution for the academic success of Aboriginal students.

The analysis of the process taken to address the school boards and their administrators was fraught with a tangle of emotions that were felt and difficult to explain. The temptation was to leave it. However, I am grateful to the administrators of the school for participating in the conversations and describing the spaces they worked in within the institution.

I reviewed the contents of my journal that recorded events, my experiences, and my reactions. In my journal, I sorted out conversations to understand the silences and resistances as I experienced them. I reviewed Yin's (2003) work on *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* for direction on how to examine the various turns of events during the process. I found Yin's reference to Schramm's (1971) quote beneficial. "The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a *decision* or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (p. 12). I examined my journal from a case perspective, as an engaged participant sorting out the boundaries in ethical space. I contemplated how funding policies might be written to accommodate Aboriginal Elders in the classroom. I followed Koch's (1998) interpretative research and applied the exercise of "journaling, observing, listening and rigour" to tell an exploratory case study story.

The OME (2007b) First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework directs local school boards and schools to build partnerships and relationships with local Aboriginal peoples to address the conundrums of Aboriginal student success. There are expectations for change in the education system.

Duke (2004) suggested that there are two orders of change:

1. First order change expects that changes are designed to return the system to a prior desired state but with intentions to improve performance or conditions without altering the basic nature of the system, and

2. A second order change involves altering such foundational aspects of the system as its goals, underlying assumptions and relationship patterns (Barott & Raybould, 1998, p. 35).

Duke (2004) also expressed that change may be expressed in terms of six dimensions: Purpose, Unit, Nature, Magnitude, Extent, and Duration.

I kept these aspects in mind as I analyzed the process to gain entry into the publicly funded classroom to conduct research. Using my journal entries as a guide, I expounded on the lessons I learned about cross-cultural research in publicly funded classrooms that could include accommodating Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and their teachers.

Ethical space is a novel theoretical place from which to argue the relationships with Aboriginal peoples in education. Glasser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory as a method to explain a process. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) methods apply analysis of qualitative data with intent to build a story by arranging the data into categories, and then interconnecting those categories. Grounded theory guided the analysis of the process and interviews as categories of information. The process is a record of factual evidence of ethical space. The open-ended questions were designed to encourage volunteer respondents to share their experience and knowledge as new information through face-to-face interviews. The final analysis sought to understand a story of ethical space in this geographical locale

The next Chapter was arranged to first report on the steps taken to preposition the study. The second part address the findings and analysis of data from volunteer respondents. A final summary offers an overview.

CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The resistance to the proposed placement of Aboriginal Elders in the classroom and the words of Rebecca and Rachel in their interviews are discussions of significant realizations for future cross-cultural research in publicly funded educational settings that involved Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The process to apply an exploratory, multiple case, participatory action, Aboriginal designed and delivered study with an Aboriginal cross-cultural design to involve two school boards and Aboriginal peoples within a geographic area is also about the issues and obstacles that ended the study. The co-relative aspects for relationship building in ethical space as a co-existent strategy through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt were not appraised by the public school system. Rather, a cycle was realized. There was acceptance of a proposal to place Aboriginal Elders in the classroom, then silence, and then complications. Finally, the proposed plan was rejected. The existing structure could not accommodate the request. Yet, interviews with a student and adult educator confirmed that Aboriginal Elders in the classrooms and in the schools needed to be an inclusive event in the Aboriginal story for control of their education.

I correlated the sensibilities gleaned from face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and emails as a story in research bound in the confines of cross-cultural space within one geographic locale. I encountered differences in language, text discourse, and contemplations for meanings of relationships and partnerships between the local education system and the Aboriginal community. I offered my insights to essential issues in cross-cultural research approaches in education to imply Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded classroom. The interviews offered insights into the values and beliefs for

the placement of Aboriginal Elders in the secondary school. The participants did not differentiate stages for becoming an Elder.

This study of ethical space through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt led me to hypothesize that those school boards who place Aboriginal Elders in the classroom may be advanced in their philosophy to deliver curriculum content and delivery, and teacher practice as a relationship-building strategy towards academic success of Aboriginal students. I was intrigued by the complexities of publicly funded education. I assumed the interplay of rights, politics, and policies at the cultural divide to be the barriers to Aboriginal student success and not the intent of teachers in the classroom. Teachers were expected to adhere to those policies that designed their careers.

My motivation to design a study hinged on the OME (2007b) First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework. This policy framework directed local schools and local school boards to build relationships and partnerships with local Aboriginal peoples to address Aboriginal student success. During the stage of my proposal presentations to leaders and decision makers tasked with the education of Aboriginal students in this geographic locale, I encountered limitations of roles and relationships in cross-cultural participatory research in education. The deliberations of the OME (2007b) for a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework was status quo:

> The framework also clarifies the roles and relationships of the ministry, school boards, and schools in their efforts to help First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students achieve their educational goals and close the gap in academic achievement with their non-Aboriginal counterparts. (p. 6)

The wording of the policy framework was designed to address the academic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students through the objectivities of the institution. This study offered a solution to close the gap by placing Aboriginal Elders in the classroom, and this required policy changes at the local level of schools. The study demonstrated how the institutional design to educate Aboriginal students resists change. The interviews that were conducted documented a sample of Aboriginal values and beliefs. The interviews were rich in detail and expression of how Aboriginal Elders as educators in the publicly funded education system were welcomed. The text of the interviews contradicted the emotions of the interviewees as they indicated their support for an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom while knowing from experience how the school system worked. For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the school boards, schools, and potential and actual volunteer participants were not identified or described.

Journaling the Journey

My goal was to reach the teachers and work with them to determine their reception to the idea of placing an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. From past experience, I knew that the protocol was to contact the School Board Directors and wait for their decision to accept my inquiry and designate a superintendent to work through my application to conduct the research. Through the superintendents, I received word whether or not my proposal was workable. I did receive letters of support and I took guidance from each Superintendent within their school board. This section details the steps taken to locate a teacher, and then the unexpected standstill that included silences and complications before rejection of the proposal.

Within School Board A, the discussions with the superintendent and a local school principal to explore the idea of placing an Aboriginal Elder in a classroom to work alongside a teacher appeared positive until limitations overshadowed their preferences to study the school environment rather than the classroom. The school principal had offered to be involved if the wording of the agreement was compatible with the school language and goals. On June 16, 2011, School Board A Supervisor and a principal determined 314 revisions, 112 suggested insertions, 145 deletions, 51 formatting suggestions, and made six comments. Upon review, there were too many requests for changes to my proposal, particularly with regards to placing an Elder in the school community rather than the proposed classroom. However, the insertions, deletions, and comments offered new perspectives of school administrative discourse. By the end of May 2011, the School Board A Principal indicated preference for the location of research not be confined to a 72-hour semester but rather a school setting. The principal's preference to study relationships outside the classroom would not have met the goals of my study and the decision was made to not conduct research in the school.

School Board B Superintendent indicated interest in the proposal as it was written and submitted that a teacher and related funding needed to be in place. Funds were made available in February 2012. I met with four teachers from two schools as arranged by the Aboriginal/Lead Special Assignment Teacher on March 27, 2012. This group indicated agreement with the proposed study as presented. When curious and interested teachers met, a teacher expressed the assumption that this researcher would be the Aboriginal Elder in the classroom (meeting March 27, 2012). The teacher request would have made for an interesting study but there would have had to be a number of revisions and a

request for a modification to the study that would have been a longer delay. Both school board suggestions were viable for a study at another time.

None of the First Nations Directors and Managers offered comments to the wording of the proposal, and neither did the one Aboriginal Elder I met with.

My journal became my battleground of self-reflexive responses. I began to feel unprepared and searched for additional articles by researchers who conducted cross-cultural, participatory action research. I needed to understand better the school leadership discourse so that I could better mediate across this particular cultural divide. I delved deeper to ascertain whether the complexities of rights, politics, and policies are the true barriers for the assertion of Aboriginal Elders in the classrooms. I was not fully cognizant of how the completion of a cross-cultural study in any school classroom could be blocked by administrative concerns such as funding sources, other research projects, self-identification of students, and school council concerns.

Funding

I felt the unspoken contentions between the local schools and First Nation communities concerning control of funds. I considered how funds are used in the cross-cultural equation for consideration of Aboriginal student success in publicly funded schools. Federal and provincial dollars are a dividing force in the administration of services for Aboriginal student success. I provide greater detail further into this chapter.

Other Research Projects

Near the end of May 2011, I discovered there were other research proposals being considered through a conversation with a School Board A Superintendent. I also learned of another First Nations project to document Elders' stories and experiences in October

2011 but I was not privy to the details for either study. In my presentations for future cross-cultural studies, I determined to make direct inquiries to school boards and First Nations councils to determine where the energies for research are focused.

Self-Identification of Aboriginal Students

My presentations suggested that student quantitative and qualitative data would offer concrete information for context of success in the classroom where an Aboriginal Elder and Teacher worked together. Aboriginal peoples are aware of one another and will self-identify to one another within a classroom (Longboat, 2008b). School Superintendent A informed me that self-identification of Aboriginal students and their data could not be shared. However, if the local First Nation Band Councils released permission to have their members identified, this might be possible. By May 2011 I still did not have direction on how to address Métis and Inuit identification or the First Nation living off-reserve within the schools.

School Council Concerns

I was unable to locate information to make direct contact with school councils. I hoped the school leadership would provide me with assistance. School Board Superintendent A informed me that the school council had concerns such as:

- What would other groups want?
- What else will we have to respond to if we do this project?
- How do we keep it inclusive especially when some of the teachings are not inclusive?

I was reminded about an Aboriginal Education meeting that took place in April 2011. I attended that meeting and heard the passionate negative responses by some Aboriginal

and non-Aboriginal parents about smudging as an Aboriginal defined activity that was questioned as having religious implications. The school administration concerns were based on how to approach challenges to the status quo school community. Although questions were directed to me, I understood that any requests from Aboriginal community are about new interaction with the unknowns of another culture such as spirituality. The OME (2007b) First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework does not offer insights on how to support that (journal notes, June 16, 2011). Battiste (2013) associates spiritual challenge as:

> The silence on First Nations spirituality in the classroom, even in denominational schools, has left a gap in learning which reduces education to the mind and skills, and removing the factor that fuels our passion for our work, love, and meaning making. Yet, terms like spirit and spirituality are not used freely. (p. 182)

Battiste (2013) associated spirituality as part of Aboriginal authenticity, as a "core of our revealed self" and cited Tisdell (2003, p. 32) that "each of us is operating "more from a sense of self that is defined by one's own self as opposed to being defined by other people's expectations" (p. 183). Given this context, it seemed sensible that Aboriginal students would be supported in their spiritual learning as the course of study to be allowed to be their self. The reciprocal environment for positive school experiences would enable "creating an environment or space where people bring their whole selves, their stories, their voice, their culture, their symbols, and their spiritual experience to their learning" (Battiste, 2013, p. 139). The residential school experience tried to take the Indian out of the child by snuffing their spiritual selves and this had disastrous results.

The next section contemplates the issues and obstacles to place Aboriginal Elders in the school classroom.

The Proposition

Understanding the positionality of the researcher is a necessary self-reflexive activity in Aboriginal culture and is discussed by Absolon and Willett (2005) and Kovach (2005). Although I had knowledge of ethical space and written a Master's Thesis in one school through the support of a now retired principal, I felt a different support from the principals invited to be involved in this study. Not all schools are the same. I seriously took the advice of a confidant that a school I felt would have been a good fit for the research was not positioned for it. At the same time, I felt confident in those schools that indicated their willingness to participate. I highlight nine areas of the study: Proposal Package, Researcher Location, Timing, Funding, Defining and Choosing a Teacher, Choosing an Elder, and Choosing a Classroom.

Proposal Package

I submitted copies of my proposal to all contacts for review and questions. The package consisted of: Information Letter; Information for Consent; Informed Consent/Assent Form for Talking Circles; Pre-Post Survey; Pre-Post Questions for Talking Circle; Letter of Invitation to Secondary School Principals; Principal Survey; Pre, Mid, and Post Survey for Teachers; Sample of Instruction for Journal writing for Teachers, Students, and Elders; Mid and Post Talking Circle Guide; and Informed Consent/Assent Form for Classroom Observation. I anticipated the Elder involvement in the classroom as a professional learning exercise might translate into a state of progress about the OME (2007b) policy framework concerning First Nations, Métis, and Inuit

peoples at the local level. The study would deliver pre and post surveys and questionnaires consisting of check boxes for choice answers as well as space for participants to add an additional response.

Administrative leadership in publicly funded schools is an important consideration for a study that is cross-cultural. I went through the protocols and processes in my attempt to reach the teachers. I had chosen a geographic locale that embarked on projects related to their understanding of ethical space. During a conversation in May 2011, the School Board A Superintendent described the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework as the policy for putting in place ethical space.

I imagined a cross-cultural design by inviting all parties to review my proposal before they agreed to participate. The schools responded from an administrative, institutional perspective. I had hoped comments, however subjective, to be forthcoming from the Aboriginal leadership. I was disillusioned by the silences. I interpreted the interest as extant when there were inquiries from First Nations school counsellors in January 2012 to the School Board A Superintendent. There were also questions of progress from First Nations Directors and Managers to myself. However, despite my requests from the First Nations Directors and Managers to direct me on the protocols and processes to make a presentation to their Chiefs and Councils, it was not addressed. One First Nation Director/Manager requested I provide a short letter of request and I submitted that by email with a copy to all First Nations Directors and Managers. I assumed the First Nations parties were waiting for school responses and explained that I was also seeking general community responses from the geographic locale but received no reply. The protocol for gaining entry in First Nations communities is to make the

request and receive approval before entering their community. I expected that the First Nations Directors and Managers would critique my proposal and then indicate support or not to their Supervisors.

Researcher Location

The location of my home office during the research project is a 40-minute drive to the nearest high school and an hour and a half at the boundary of my geographic location of study. I was available by email and phone messages. I requested school space and First Nations space for confidentiality to meet with teachers, the principal, students, and community to enable their response to the study. Being in the school was an advantage in one other study (Longboat, 2008b). I was able to schedule my time for meetings with the school leadership, the teachers, principals, and community on a week-by-week basis around my other scholarly commitments. My requests for space were not addressed or acted upon by either School Board or any First Nations.

Timing

I had hoped to first begin responding to community inquiries near the end of the school year 2011 and then during the summer (2011) to arrange interviews and Talking Circles. But I needed local school commitments to be involved. I did not anticipate funding issues as both school board superintendents indicated support from their supervisors but there was the lack of funding. I was ignorant of the protocols and policies to release funding. At the outset, the Tribal Education Director/Manager informed me that they were an advisory body and did not have funding support to offer. Potential funding from the First Nations communities is discussed later under federal funding. The

timing for release of potential funds to support an Aboriginal Elder in the publicly funded classroom was not known. This aspect is also addressed later in this chapter.

At the First Nations community level, I met with Education Directors and Managers as a group and as individuals during the year of 2011 seeking an opportunity to meet with students, parents, and community. One First Nation Director offered to include me on the agenda of a gathering to be held August 2011, but that activity did not evolve. I assumed it was related to the decision by the local school in June 2011 to decline involvement. None of the other First Nations communities initiated willingness to assist my requests and the reason was more likely to timing and workload issues.

Timing was a major issue in my meetings with the five First Nations Education Directors and Managers. Summer holidays, fall band elections, and revolving staff were obstacles. Band Council elections usually occur in the fall every 2 years and it would not be until the New Year that they might be prepared to address new correspondence. First Nation election schedules vary from one community to the next. Holidays are usually taken in July and August in the First Nations communities I contacted. In one First Nations community, the Education office is closed in July and August. I was not aware of these individual First Nation community activities that would create delays in feedback and discussion. First Nations Directors and Managers meet as a tribal member group and I hoped to review my study with them at a meeting in December 2011.

The end of the school year may not have been a good time to meet with students as they were addressing their exams. I had no data on the parents of students to make direct contact. Without a place from which to direct community members to drop in and make inquiries, I had no way to connect with them. Further, I realized that a section to

include in my proposal might be to suggest a partnership with the school, and First Nations to create a community announcement by radio, newspaper, or flyer and this would require additional time to develop at the outset.

Defining and Choosing a Teacher

During the discussions, I began to realize how the cross-cultural relationship in the local education systems was hindered by institutional rules for entitlement and protection of knowledge. Goulet et al.'s (2009) study indicated "that in order for Elder involvement in schools to be successful, a solid and productive relationship between teacher and Elder is necessary [Coke-Dallin, Underwood, & Underwood, 2000; Freedman & Jaffe, 1993; Lipka, Mohatt, & the Ciulistet Group, 1998]" (p. 3). Acknowledgment of community recognized Aboriginal Elders as traditional Knowledge Holders with pedagogical skills and wisdom as partners in the local school classroom was, perhaps, an innovative approach in today's contemporary society but there would need to be discussions amongst all parties on how the sharing of knowledge might take place.

Choosing an Elder

Aboriginal Elders were attending various schools of this geographic locale as part of their role as supporting community members. As was noted by one administrator, there is a difference between a resource and having an Aboriginal Elder situated in the classroom.

I hoped to clarify the perceptions of need for Aboriginal Elders in the mainstream classroom by simultaneously examining the assumptions associated with Aboriginal student success in education. Ontario's public education system defined student success

with specific measurements. Aboriginal Elders who were situated on a daily basis in the school classroom might signal encouragement for student access through representation of Aboriginal community, ideas, values, and beliefs as a normal aspect of public education (Goulet et al., 2009; Lafrance, 2000).

I advised in my proposal that an Aboriginal Elder, recognized by the Aboriginal community, be accommodated to work alongside a Teacher in the classroom. A clarification was suggested towards my original proposal concerning community-based decisions in exchange for "Elder selection to be agreed upon by partnering First Nations, school administrators, Board Superintendent and [this researcher] after specific criteria determined" (document changes June, 2011, p. 6). Discussion around which title to confer upon the Aboriginal Elder in the classroom was an issue. The institutional word for teacher as a noun-based reference is different from the Aboriginal verb-based understandings. My proposal submission intended recognition of an Elder in the classroom as a co-teacher. My suggestion was to use a word such as "Sot," a word in the Cayuga language that refers to respect of an Aboriginal Elder teacher. Participants were to be tasked to give a title in the language of the traditional peoples of the geographic area. The language of the education system determined that Aboriginal Elders could not be given the title of teacher. Initial discussions to recognize Aboriginal Elders as professional resources for the benefit of teachers in the classrooms concluded that Elders would be addressed as classroom supports and tutors to align with funding approval expectations and delineation of approved roles as expected by the Ontario Ministry of Education funding guidelines.

Despite assurances that the Elder chosen would meet with the teacher prior to being in class, the teachers were wary about how much time they would need over and above their regular duties to meet with the Aboriginal Elders, monitor how the student is learning under the direction of the Elder, and the respect between student and Elder. The Aboriginal Lead/Special Assignment Teacher spoke to inform the teachers that based on personal experience, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are attentive and respectful towards Aboriginal Elders conducting presentations. If the teacher perceived that more hours are needed to work with an Elder in the classroom, the issue would be taken to the union so that negotiation of time and compensation of time would be arranged.

Two school board employees submitted several names of Aboriginal Elders and Senators. A retired Aboriginal teacher privately requested consideration as an Aboriginal Elder after one meeting. When I made the suggestion to the First Nation and School parties, the individual was not acknowledged.

School Board B was prepared to fund an Aboriginal Elder identified as well-known and residing close to the involved school. However, the timing did not allow the required steps outlined in the study to choose and prepare an Aboriginal Elder with allowance for time to develop a relationship with the volunteer Teacher.

Choosing a Classroom

Although my correspondence with a school in School Board A ended with their decision not to be involved in the study, their comments, questions, and information were extremely beneficial. A principal and superintendent worked on the wording of the proposal to meet protocol, policies, and guidelines of a school. I did not meet with the teachers. A preference was voiced for a study that would address Aboriginal Elders in the

whole school rather than a classroom approach as the school was already working with Elders as in-service. This request would have required a redesign. It was brought to my attention that some of the school's pathways were not situated as classrooms but rather the students were in soup kitchens, involved in outdoor education, and co-op and other nontraditional partnerships. The school preferred to build on the programs already in place with Aboriginal Elders and have Aboriginal Elders visit the classrooms. I was not given a description of how Elders are accommodated in the school, nor advised as to the numbers of students who were in the school's nontraditional programs.

School Board B Superintendent directed me to work with their Aboriginal Lead/Special Assignment Teacher. At first, meetings were held with the Superintendent and the Aboriginal Lead/Special Assignment Teacher so that I would answer and ask questions, and there was agreement on details of the study. The Aboriginal Teacher was the mediator, between the Superintendent, Principals, and the Teachers, concerning the school environment and myself. Together, the Aboriginal Teacher and I established a viable timeframe and the focus was agreed upon to place an Aboriginal Elder in a religious unit that would include Native Spirituality. Other suggestions for classroom presentations were the Arts, Civics, Grade 10 History, or any other class where it appeared Aboriginal students were not doing well, or were in attendance in high numbers. When funds became available in February 2012, the Aboriginal Lead/Special Assignment Teacher led the discussions concerning a budget and arranged compensation of time for the four teachers who attended a meeting and that also included two principal to hear my presentation of the proposed study. The principals did not ask questions and left for another meeting. A surprising revelation came from one teacher who knew of my

work concerning ethical space; the teacher expressed disappointment with the assumption that I would be the Elder in the classroom. I had not anticipated that response. Perhaps, if the study had been designed with that indication, I could have gained access to a classroom for the study. However, the current study would have required alterations and a longer timeframe.

The classroom was not a neutral place. Figure 3 is a visual of relationships amongst the decision-making parties of the involved schools. The administrators of School Board A, and the teachers of School Board B spoke out their concerns. Amongst other issues raised by the end of May 2011, a School Board A Principal expressed concerns about supervision of the classroom. One Principal voiced the assumption that without school supervision of the Aboriginal Elder, the study appeared to serve as an evaluation of teachers. I was informed that the evaluation of teachers is the responsibility of the principals who address how the teachers teach and how they conduct themselves in the classroom. I was informed that having an Elder in the classroom was not congruent with teacher contract and union; I was stymied. I lacked the knowledge as to how unions and teachers interface.

Various administrators and teachers within both school boards indicated that classroom planning would have to be adjusted and that meant extra work. The concerns were about how to incorporate activities for the Elder in the classroom and introduce the Elder's presence, and they felt there would be more work to observe what the Elder was doing. The teacher in the classroom was in a position of power. The teacher had authority and by virtue of the profession and their union, they commanded respect from the student and any other body in the classroom. Whoever had responsibility to supervise was in a

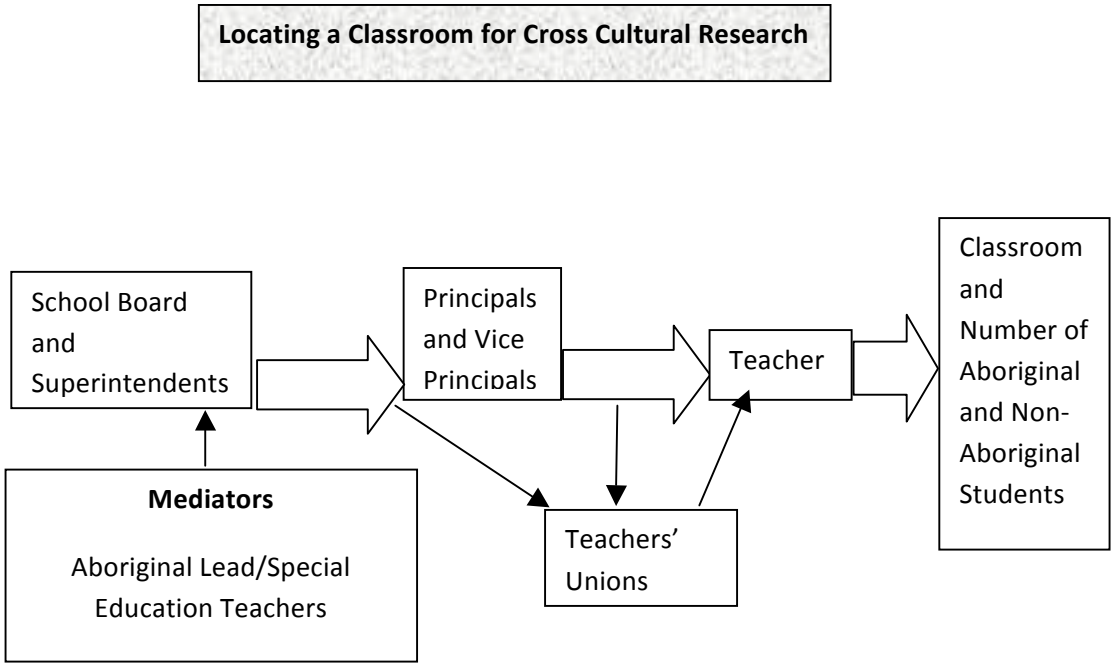

Figure 3. Locating the classroom for cross-cultural research.

position of power. The teachers worked under the authority of their school board with a supervisor who evaluated their work. The dynamics of working alongside an Aboriginal Elder as a recognized Knowledge Holder would upset the status quo mindset of who had power in the classroom:

- Will the power be distributed equally in the dissemination of work?
- Will there be an imbalance of relations between the students and the two classroom leaders?
- Who will supervise the Aboriginal Elder?

Although I was unable to gain access to teachers in School Board A, one local school shared their progress: they approved Aboriginal resource peoples who provided formal presentations, one presentation is embedded into a Dance Unit. The conversation ended with the statement that the teachers supported what was already in place. The province dictates how Aboriginal studies are delivered in the classroom and this has implications for classroom delivery. The rule was a minimum of eight students and that changed to 20 students before a Native Studies course could be offered.

One scenario offered insight that perhaps the Aboriginal students were being stereotyped into models of the local dominant traditional Aboriginal culture when a student described Self as being "from the reserve but I am not like the Rez." The implication was there; the Aboriginal students felt the new focus of the school to implement the OME (2007b) First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework. How the schools identified students was the issue.

The rebuttals to my proposal seemed defensive. How the Aboriginal students were set up to learn amongst their non-Aboriginal peers was pivotal to their success.

Secondary Aboriginal students did not have options in this geographic area to attend a school for their cultural support such as might be offered in institutions under First Nation jurisdiction. I was empathetic with the dilemma of this school to determine how best to approach Aboriginal student success. Resources were limited.

Thus, the stage was set to understand the cultural divide in education. The power of the public education structure included labels of meaning that were designed to privilege the formal colonial powers over the informal and un-formal and was, further, dictated by funding bodies. As such, the current education framework hindered the elevation of Aboriginal Elders as recognized partners to deliver curriculum in the publicly funded school classrooms.

My dream for a study wherein an Aboriginal Elder might inform and invite Aboriginal community to become involved with understanding current mainstream educational measurements and that pedagogical reforms might advance with the help of Aboriginal Elders in classrooms while individual student cultural norms were preserved, was complicated by school policies.

Advisors, Decision Makers, and Unions

Levin (1995) shared his experience as a high school student aware of world changes and life's realities. As a young adult desiring a measure of power and control over his learning, Levin organized a "short-lived, city-wide high school students' union" (p. 1). It was received "with polite dismissal but more often with outright hostility" (p. 1) by administrators and trustees. The understanding from Levin's story is: Supervisors, teachers, and the rules of their federated union protect against any threat to teacher status, seniority, authority, or curriculum.

I considered Levin's (1995) observation to Aboriginal teachers. A teachers' union can protect the ascending pathways of its members from outsiders. Despite school closures and teacher lay-offs, there was not a quick concerted effort to open a legislative pathway so that qualified, federally funded, newly certified Aboriginal teachers might enter the provincial school system on the basis of cultural equity, need, and propinquity. Levin predicted that focused approaches to Aboriginal students would become the norm as the Aboriginal student population was demonstrating a steep demographic incline while other youth populations were declining.

Attempts by Aboriginal peoples to have their requests heard were blocked by resistance to change within the local education system. Richards, Hove, and Afolabi (2008) stressed the importance of "consensus among all parties, particularly teachers, on prioritizing Aboriginal education" (p. 16). They revealed, "some district personnel pointed to the actions of local teachers' unions in obstructing Aboriginal community members from classroom instruction" (p. 16). Richards et al. point out that without buy-in from teachers, "the improvement of educational outcomes among Aboriginal students is simply unattainable" (p. 16). The key to transformation is to reach the teachers but the teachers also need the support of their supervisors.

From Levin's (1995) story, we gain an understanding that student knowledge and practice aimed towards gaining control over learning experiences through organized peer programming is all right for teachers but not for their students. The interest in Aboriginal education is a strategic initiative as "more Canadians than ever are aware that the success of Canada as a country is entirely bound with the success of our original peoples" (Levin, 2009, p. 690). Yet, today's education system prefers to apply its efforts on what exists

rather than consider a new design that would permit Aboriginal involvement at the classroom level. Levin (1995) explained that "ground up" approaches to innovative solutions are within individual reach. "Although changes in administrative policies and practices are necessary for real and lasting school improvement, teachers do not have to wait for these to do things differently" (p. 6). Poole (1972) recognized how the institutional position rejected challenges of morally charged subjectivities and this is the crux at the cultural divide. This study examined the undercurrents. They were about Aboriginal solutions for Aboriginal student success in the publicly funded secondary school and that included participating in the distribution of funds targeted for Aboriginal students. Ethical space at the cultural divide was an exploration of possibilities. The funding issue was about control and at that moment the funding issue was the vortex of the divide.

This study was not designed to evaluate teacher decisions but rather to create a description of context and whether or not that context could change as a result of placing an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom to work alongside a teacher. Before a continuing story of change could be told, there had to be recognition of the current context and willingness to discuss that.

Funding

The parties I met with in School Board A were concerned about funding support for training teachers and principals for additional duties. Funding was a critical issue. While Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) training funds were available for the First Nations but consigned to Aboriginal leadership, the province released funds for additional training and special advisor positions to the publicly funded school boards,

which did not include the First Nations run schools. Local schools submitted proposals for their needs to the province.

I proposed that an Aboriginal Elder be sought who might be interested in fulfilling their role in a classroom, and that the name of an Aboriginal Elder be identified by the community. It was verbally agreed by all decision makers of both school boards that an Aboriginal Elder must be compensated for their involvement. The question was then raised as to where would the funds originate. Although one group of First Nations Directors and Managers attended a meeting to discuss this particular issue, neither the School Board A Superintendent nor the School Principal attended. At the time, I was unaware of funding that was available through submission of proposals by the Ministry of Education Aboriginal Education Office. I later learned that this was an unvoiced issue within the cross-cultural relationship between the First Nations and one School Board.

School Board B took advantage of that opportunity for funding and designed a proposal that would accommodate an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. The superintendent took the time to contact me by phone to voice understanding of the need for Aboriginal peoples to be able to make requests.

The Power of Funding

The school system is structured to meet economic intents. As the numbers of Aboriginal students in the school system increase, the numbers of non-Aboriginal students are decreasing but there is an overall negative gap in the academic success of Aboriginal students in relation to their non-Aboriginal peers across Canada (Fullan, 2012). School Board B Superintendent shared her overview that it appeared the on-reserve First Nations students were succeeding more often than their off-reserve

Aboriginal students. I assumed there would be an automatic interest in increasing services and increasing opportunity for Aboriginal students, their peers, and their teachers. The idea of placing Aboriginal Elders to work alongside the local school teachers seemed to be attractive enough until the issue of funding the Aboriginal Elder position and paying a teacher for extra time to be involved in the study was discussed; there were different receptions and that included silences.

In discussions with staff of different schools, it was informally decided that it would be unethical to expect an Aboriginal Elder to impart knowledge into curriculum without reimbursement. The desire to hire an Aboriginal Elder hinged on the decisions of individual school boards making decisions for funding disbursement at the local school level. It is the teachers' responsibility to submit requests to their principal for funds to bring in resources; that is, if there are funds available through the school board. The principal relates requests to his/her supervisor who is the school board superintendent.

My study required a teacher's decision to welcome an Aboriginal Elder into the classroom and allow a study of relationships. I knew I would need to negotiate and have approval against the protocols and processes of the publicly funded system before I could meet with the teachers. But, I was ignorant of how the local schools approached its directives to meet policy initiatives of the OME (2007b) First Nation, Metís and Inuit Education Policy Framework.

To introduce an Elder into the public school classroom is to raise the immediate question: Who will fund this position? The next question of concern to local school administration is: Who will supervise this position? It would take time to supervise, direct, and orient anyone who enters the classroom. Confidentiality is a priority. The

safety of the school is also a consideration. It was determined that the Aboriginal Elder required security checks and a criminal records check. Medical histories were questioned and it was expected that all medical shots were up-to-date. Teachers and parents had the right to know of any changes from the daily schedule and that included placing an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. A concern was raised as to how non-Aboriginal parents might react. How would the school reply to requests for other requests to have non-Aboriginal cultural resources to be in classrooms? The issue of Aboriginal rights in this case was related to whomever controlled the strategy to apply those rights rather than the morality of correcting the traumatic past of the original peoples by land hungry Settlers and their government.

I learned that funding was competitive and minimal, and the rules for disbursement indicated the demands of the institutional powers at play. The rewards for maintaining the rules were vertical. The residential school system, the day schools on First Nations reserved lands, in tandem with legislated and unlegislated policies across Canada maintained the cultural divide, limited social interactions, cross-cultural enterprises, and key positions within the decision-making structures of the educational, health, social, and economic fabric that was designed through Settler initiatives.

Funding Structure

Brady (1995) appraised the impact of legislation on the lives of Aboriginal peoples at the provincial and federal level. Howlett (1994) focused on the historical evolvement of policies and their focus, first to annihilate, then assimilate, accommodate, and then integrate. Although Brady wrestles with the possibility of reformative legislation, neither he nor Howlett discussed the possibility of transformative legislation.

The education of First Nations peoples on reserve in Canada was under the budgets of the federal government since the design of the *Indian Act* that was written without the knowledge of the First peoples. The design of the *Indian Act* permitted acquirement of land without the interference of First Nations peoples. Ultimately, First Nations peoples were forced into reserved communities with certain promises. Metís and Inuit peoples had their own story to tell. Most First Nations communities sent their students to elementary and secondary schools off reserve. The Chiefs of Ontario (2005) documented the inconsistencies and underfunding of the applied budgets of the federal governments in comparison to the provincial government. Whoever held the purse strings had the power to make decisions on what was best for the Aboriginal student population in the schools, whether the school was located on or off-reserve.

There were many layers around the provincial publicly funded school classroom (see Figure 4). Each layer consisted of actors, such as staff, and nonactors, such as the Aboriginal community. The interests of the system protected the classroom. Teacher time and tasks to change their daily routines were assessed according to their federated union rules. The local union rules were complex and supported by legislative acts which provided the provincial funding to both train and monitor the professional designations of being a teacher. Addressing Aboriginal Knowledge Holders with professional designation to work with Aboriginal students in the publicly funded classroom was the anticipated route. However, the outstanding conundrum was that it took a lifetime to earn status as an Elder with rights to be recognized as one of interrelated Knowledge Holders in Aboriginal societal stages of life. The institutional regard for teachers is bound in paper and their ability to learn from textbooks.

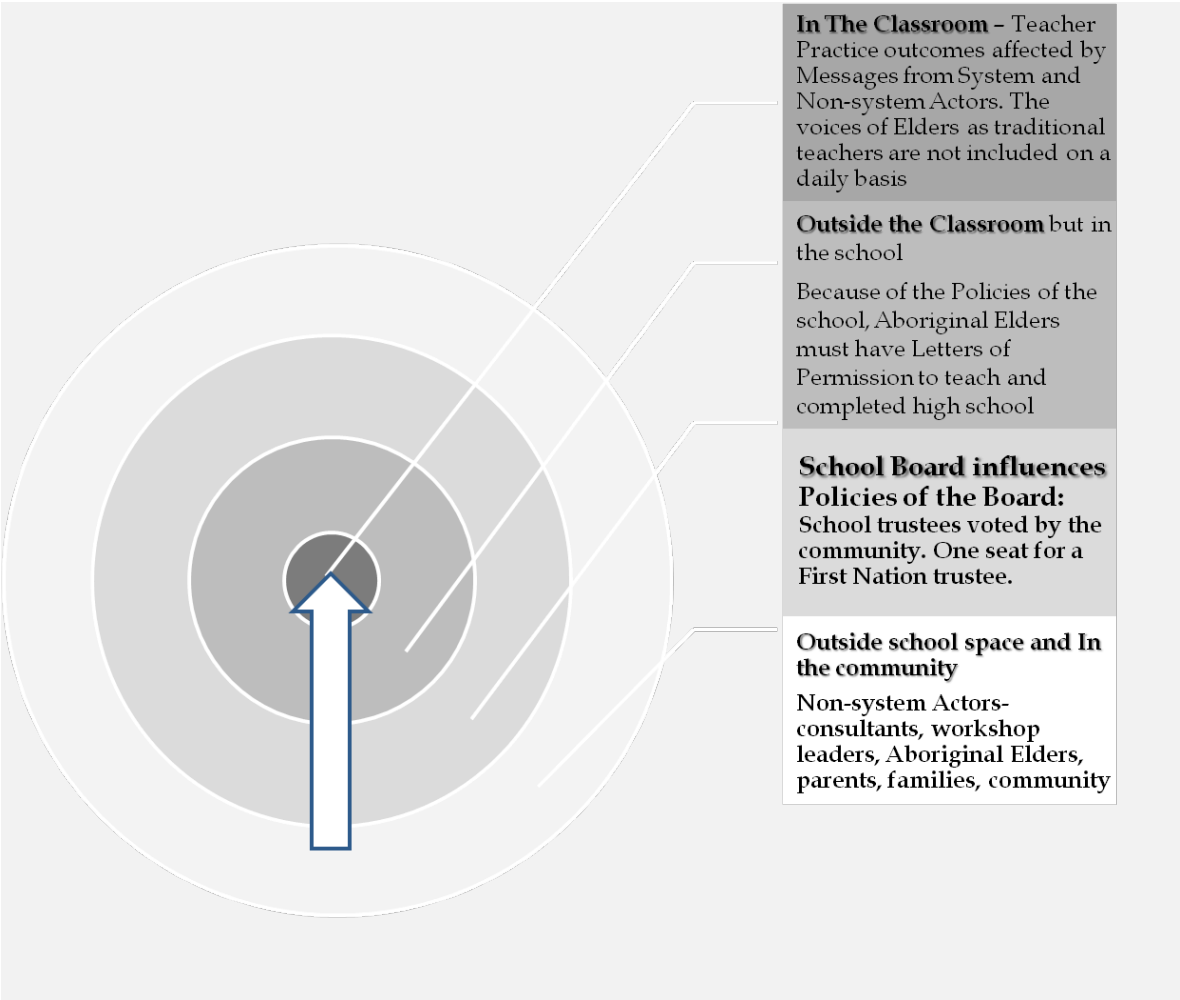

Figure 4. The location of the classroom.

Adapted from "Figure 2: Layers of Education" (Longboat, 2010, p. 227)

In this geographic locale, there was no paradigm in place to simultaneously accommodate Aboriginal (First Nations, Metís, and Inuit) community requests that included Aboriginal Elders in publicly funded classrooms. At the crux of my dilemma as I attempted to carry out a study was the conflicting funding anomalies to place an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom, provincial and federal (see Figure 5). Each funding source had its own system for disbursement, accountability, and attaining goals. There was no corroborative group discussion amongst the involved parties, school boards, schools, and First Nations communities. The public secondary school Principal in School Board A expected that the First Nations communities would provide the funds for the study and wanted to know who would supervise. Supervision ensured that the mandates of a local school are deeply entrenched within its administrative departments. How Aboriginal Elders were supervised might have influenced the data. There was no discussion amongst the involved parties as to whether co-supervision between the school and First Nation education services was possible.

It would most likely take time to negotiate funding to accommodate Aboriginal community requests. I heard the partial language in the voices of some administrators, about students as colourless, that all students were under the mandates of provincial education and curriculum expectations. One school Principal expressed the need for more special student needs support. With cuts to staff at the time, it would have been difficult to argue the need for provincial funds to place another body in the classroom. The language was about moving union supported seniority teachers into vacant or new positions rather than cutting staff.

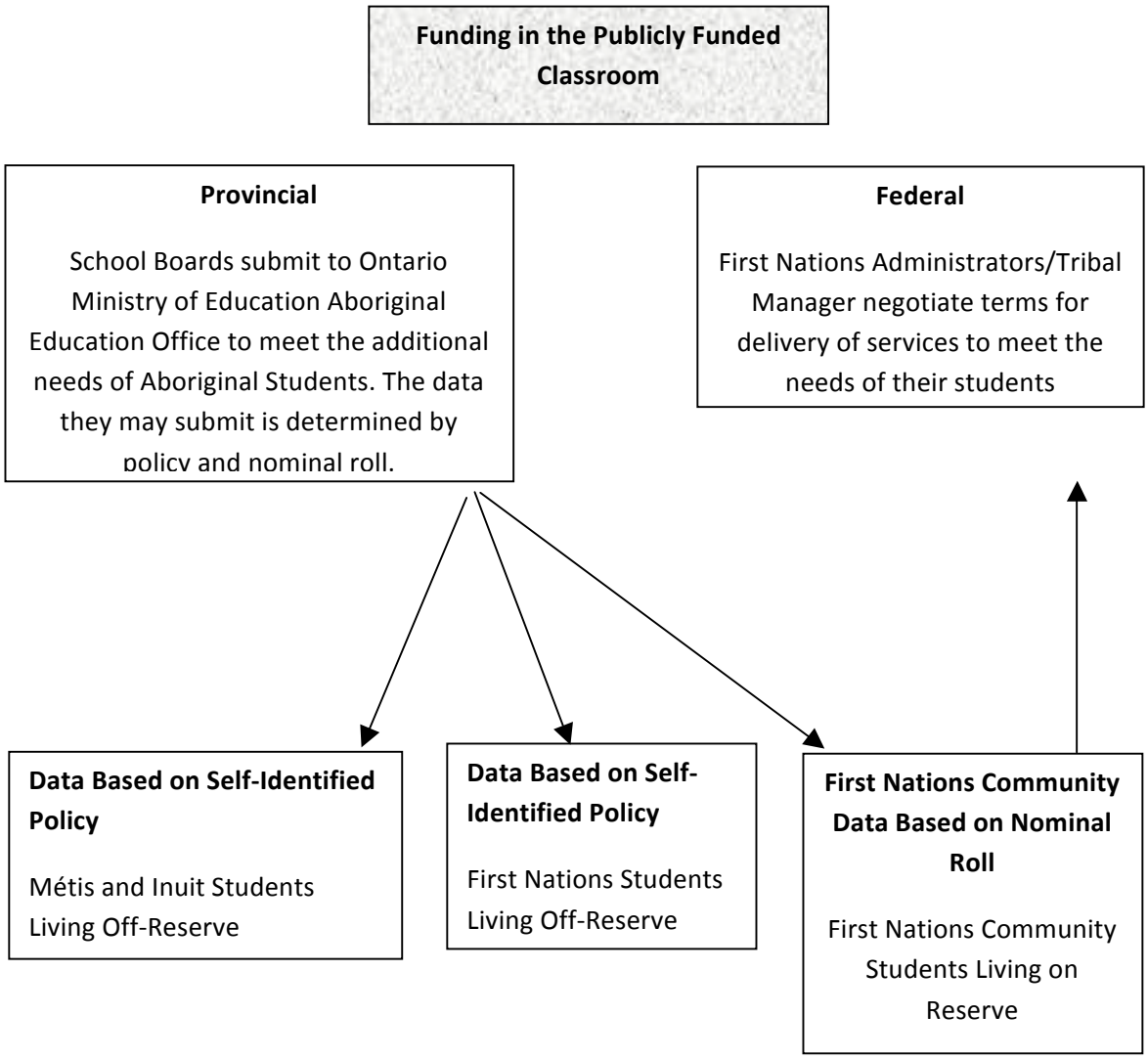

Figure 5. The publicly funded classroom.

It is doubtful that amelioration of funds would have been possible. There were statements that local school leadership did not include discussions with Aboriginal groups to disburse provincial funds to meet the needs of their students. The undercurrent in local education is quiet, but, perhaps, not ready to be exposed.

Provincial Funding

The Aboriginal Education Office [AEO] was an arm of the Ontario Ministry of Education. My calls and emails to the Regional Aboriginal Education Officer in June, July and August 2011 to gain information about possible funding initiatives were not returned. I was not privy to a July 2011 announcement of the fifth year funding opportunity "to school boards for initiatives in support of First Nation, Métis and Inuit student achievement" (Aboriginal Education Office [AEO] Memorandum, July 11, 2011). The memorandum was directed to Directors of Education and Supervisory Officers and Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities. The deadline to submit proposals for the year 2011–2012 was October 1, 2011. School Superintendent B relayed a message to me by phone that they would be submitting a proposal to include the services of an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom to align with my research proposal and asked for my input (email correspondence August 28, 2011). The Aboriginal Elder would become a tutor to align with the funding requirements (see Table 3). I pondered how the title description would align with how an Aboriginal Elder was perceived. The AEO outlined four project areas with maximum funding amounts and limitations.

Although the school board proposal was accepted in February 2012, the timeframe for my study was shrinking. The semester had started and I worked with the

Table 3

Aboriginal Education Office Funding Detail July 2011

Project Area	**Maximum Funding Amount**	**Limitation**
Using Data to Support Student Achievement	25,000	One project per Board
Supporting Students	50,000	One project per Board
Supporting Educators	50,000	One project per Board
Engagement and Awareness Building	20,000	One project per Board

Aboriginal Lead/Special Needs Teacher to outline a timeframe for the next semester as funds had to be spent by the end of the school year. The Aboriginal Lead/Special Needs Teacher sought teachers interested in working with an Aboriginal Elder but there was no response until April 2012.

By April 20, 2012, I received emails from two teachers from two different schools who were willing to be involved in the project. My expectations to conduct a study over the course of a semester were dashed. There was no time to contact, orient, and introduce an Aboriginal Elder into a school classroom. One of the teachers was willing to carry on the project for the next school year in September. Funds were to be expended by the end of the school semester. It was unknown if dollars would be available before the new school year.

Federal Funding

The OME (2007b) indicated its willingness to work with First Nations. However, the relationship suggested local First Nations participation. The document did not delineate First Nations who lived in the towns, villages, and cities of the local school whose education was funded through provincial initiatives and the First Nations who lived outside the local community of the schools in their First Nations community, otherwise known as reserve. First Nations students who came from the reserves for an education were funded with federal dollars that were a tool for negotiation of educational services.

The First Nations Education Directors and Managers informed me that if First Nations provided funding, they want the controlling edge for supervision of the Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. It was expected that the Aboriginal Elder would

specifically cater to their First Nations students only. It was explained,

> First Nations would have to agree to pay any support staff and/or Elders. This is negotiated in the tuition agreements if the First Nations pays for it – then the First Nation wants to control the job duties, description and who that person services. Typically – only that First Nation population would benefit and not 'Aboriginals'. The Métis Nation would not have any say to this position and would not be serviced (M. Yourchuck, personal communication, January 18, 2010).

Another group of Aboriginals who would not be serviced were First Nations peoples living off reserve and who are not members of the local First Nations groups.

In collaboration with a First Nations Director, several First Nations education directors, managers, and a School Board A Superintendent and a secondary school principal were invited to a meeting in a First Nations community Board Room on July 26, 2012. The local school board representatives each sent an email advising they would not be in attendance. The public school principal's response was that it did not seem appropriate to attend a meeting where the First Nations would be discussing funding sources to place an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. In hindsight, the refusal to be involved in the participatory aspects of the study to discuss a strategy on funding possibilities to place an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom was political. It was at that point that after some struggle on my part to determine whether the school intended to or not, I felt they assigned blame to First Nations for not offering additional resources for Aboriginal student success in the publicly funded school. By the middle of June 2011, I was fully aware that there was a belief that First Nations had funding to provide additional student supports; someone to work with Aboriginal parents, encourage

parental involvement, getting an Elder to come in and bring other people in.

Meeting Spaces

I felt the resistance. Aboriginal peoples desired to express their own knowledge sets, but when their experiences were nullified, ignored or rejected, ethical space was limited by unspoken and unshared values, beliefs, and assumptions. Aboriginal knowledge arose from a different school of thought and was not always easy to explain. I was in a place where it was difficult to express meaning from one culture to another without giving the impression of being disrespectful.

There were many cultural contradictions within the geographical locale of the two school boards. I contacted and invited five First Nations to be involved. Each community had its own realities, mandates, and governing bodies for the education of their children. The tensions of cultural contradictions create overflow into limitations of expression, choice, and language discourse. Participants strived to express their cultural imperatives to understand the other without prejudices or preconceived assumptions and this was important for transformational steps forward. Willie Ermine summed up this idea: "Ethical space is acknowledging two different systems and that space between them. This is the space where everybody works together to see how knowledge works. No party becomes dominant and it is a matter of equal relationship" (Kaplan-Myrth & Smylie, 2006, p. 19). Such sharing of knowledge revealed the objectivities of the institution and revealed the complications to address the placement of an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom.

The space for meetings might have had a bearing on how the Aboriginal leaders and decision makers approach their relationships with the school boards. The meetings

were held in the school board offices. The First Nations living in rural communities mentioned the time it took to attend and their limited budgets to send an alternate representative. Interested community members were welcome to attend as observers but it was difficult, particularly, during the winter months. Further, the meetings were held late in the day, compounding additional difficulties of night-time driving through the rural settings of each district. The secretary for the meetings was Aboriginal, but was supervised under the employment of the school board and was restricted to what could be shared.

Cross-Cultural Committee

My verbal suggestions to create a committee, or Elder's advisory group, for authenticity, transparency, and nonpartisan participation of the project were met with apathy by all parties. Another silence. No one asked about who would fund the expenses.

My perspective was that a local committee should be negotiated into a cross-cultural research proposal that covered a geographic area consisting of various First Nations and different school boards. I found many conundrums inherent in the cross-cultural relationships within this geographical area that might have been ameliorated early in the proposal stage with a committee to monitor the project.

The local school and its local community members had their own struggles in addressing the OME (2007b) First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework. The administrative bodies of the school boards worked to implement Aboriginal community requests that came from both on- and off-reserve communities. The individual First Nations may have had its own imperatives to address student success. Implementing a cross-cultural committee into the research with the involvement of Band

Councils required advance awareness of their political timeframes, their goals and objectives for the education of their students and that required additional time and money to build relationships.

The Interviews

There were similarities in the dialogues of Rachel and Rebecca. Each had a set of questions from which to explore their values and beliefs about placing an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom. Both volunteer participants were from the geographic local of a tribal entity and maintained regular connections with their First Nations community. They were from different First Nations communities, were not related by blood, lived in two separate cities, and were not known to each other. At the time of the interviews, Rachel was still in school and Rebecca was still working with youth although not in the school system

In the Words of Rachel

The first volunteer participant, whose pseudonym name is Rachel, participated in the face-to-face interviews as a student who had recently graduated from grade 12. She was still involved in her off-reserve, publicly funded high school, while taking part-time studies in early childcare. She confidently expressed herself as a successful student having completed grade 12 in four years. She felt she was "ready to finish high school and be a successful Aboriginal student." In her words, her parents "wanted me to finish high school on time instead of me being like them not finishing high school on time." She found friends to hang out with and who had the same goals to finish high school on time. To her, Aboriginal student success looked like "keep their head up high, and listen," and they "don't just sit around and not do anything."

Aboriginal Elders

Rachel offered an explanation as to why Aboriginal Elders needed a specific title when they were in the school providing assistance to teachers. She explained that: "They should have that high level of school to be recognized as Aboriginal Teachers but they (Aboriginal Elders) don't really have **that** (emphasis by Rachel) knowledge, but they have different knowledge, different experiences and stuff."

How Aboriginal Elders Teach

The issue of book learning as a qualifying credential was a contentious issue for Rachel. She described the differences between an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom and a Teacher. When she was questioned if it was possible to place an Aboriginal Elder into the classroom to teach, if they had learned from a book in order to teach, she struggled to give a direct answer. "Should they? (Pause). I don't know. Yeah, no. Yeah and no. But that is basically the way they do it nowadays, from the books really. People just learn from the books." Rachel's response was an indication of being conditioned to believe that learning in high school was taken from textbooks. She was critical of non-Aboriginal teachers who taught native studies, art, language, and history, but who did not have the lived experiences. Her solution for bringing in Aboriginal Elders and creating better learning experiences in these classes was expressed as, "That would be one whole classroom…just mix them all together into one." She explained that all four subjects needed to be taught by Aboriginal people. A critical example is the critique about a history class she participated in.

> And history. There is a non-Aboriginal teaching that too. Doesn't really know that either, but it is from the books too. I took that class. [The teacher] didn't even

> learn about it, [the teacher] just took the class, and, you know, the Aboriginal books and just stuff like that. No discussions, just from the book.

When asked if it would be a good idea to put an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom, Rachel's response was curt: "I think it would be better than having a non-Aboriginal in there." She explained, "I found [the teacher] to be just reading from the books – just reading from the books – [the teacher] was not teaching from experience." Rachel seemed agitated. She did not seem impressed with the quality of her high school experience.

When I asked Rachel if her classes were conducted in traditional circles, she gave several examples about what her classes were like such as Native Art. She explained: "In the Native Arts class - somewhat. But we did not do it like that much." Trying to understand the extent of her experience, I asked if she felt involved. She answered, "I did, but it is just the different kinds of Aboriginal art - it was just basically art – Natives just taking an art class, like, just taking native art class."

Rachel's voice seemed stressed with her disappointment that she did not get the full experience of her subjects from the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal Pedagogy and Reputation in the Classroom

Rachel seemed frustrated, and that was perhaps tinged with disappointment about how subject content is delivered. Her opinion about classes as a study in Aboriginal studies would be best designed as an approach from the perspective of a native person's experience. The insinuation was that the subject was treated from a colonial perspective, that native art, language, and history were individual teachable subjects within Settler curriculum design. Rachel gave an example of how a First Nations curriculum is

approached and delivered. She recalled her elementary experiences in a First Nations school, where the teacher spoke to the students in their Ojibwa language, and taught them in a manner that Rachel felt could be carried forward into high school. The teacher sat in a circle with the students, demonstrated what was being taught at the board, and encouraged her students to use the board to practice and teach other students.

> Like I remember when I went to the school on reserve. I liked their teaching more. If she wanted to teach us anything, she would make us sit in a circle instead of behind a school desk…She sat in a circle too…She taught us to do certain things at the board.

What impressed Rachel most was in being able to go to the teacher, knowing that the teacher knew the subject and did not have to refer to a book: "Like I said, [this teacher] was not from the books. If I came to her she would not be learning the language from the books and stuff…She spoke her language all the time." Rachel felt comfortable with her elementary First Nations teacher. This teacher placed herself as part of a learning environment where community was synchronized into a circle. This teacher knew what she was teaching so well she did not need to refer to a book though she most likely had a lesson plan. Rachel indicated she felt confident going to the teacher and getting an immediate response.

In looking back at her learning experience, Rachel was able to make comparisons of pedagogical methods of her language teacher in elementary school and the high school language teacher – one knew the language as part of her experience of being a First Nations community member and the other was of Aboriginal heritage but appeared to have learned the language and how to teach through a book.

Rachel's observation of her two experiences indicated how two Aboriginal teachers approached their roles as teachers. Rachel was able to determine approachability as a community experience and she had a high regard for her first teacher. She did not have the same level of respect for the high school teacher based on the reputation of not knowing the language. The idea of not knowing is exemplified with the sign of the book being used in conjunction with teaching.

Rachel's criticisms also came from a personal place where she did not feel confident in learning a language in the high school classroom where the teacher was Aboriginal. She felt the language teacher learned from the book and, therefore, was not an Aboriginal teacher, "He is just not an Aboriginal teacher." Rachel admitted to not taking the Ojibwa language class for specific reasons and that included reports back from fellow students who were taking the language class, and who were familiar with the language.

> I really do not know him [Aboriginal language teacher]. I do not like his teaching…some people said…like the Ojibwa language – some said he said it wrong, like it sounded weird. I cannot remember what words he was saying wrong. He was not saying it right. Like my friends said…it was from the books.

In this example, the student listened to her friends who knew some of the language and, based on their response, the student determined not to take the course. However, the student had concerns, "Some [kids] are non-Aboriginal and they are taking a language and they think it's the real language." A further description portrays disappointment in the language teacher at the high school.

> When I look at the Aboriginal teacher in there right now…he may be native…there is just this vibe around him. I wouldn't feel comfortable sitting in his class…He just spoke it from the books and like he was saying we are doing all this and stuff. I never sat in [that teacher's] classroom before, but it was just what I heard…He is just not an Aboriginal teacher.

Rachel nodded in agreement with my paraphrase that this individual is teaching from the books, just another teacher teaching from the books. She offered descriptions of an Aboriginal Elder who would be successful in the school classroom and what they would do.

- "Not from the book but through discussion"
- "Bring an Aboriginal Elder in and just talk – just talk – about different history and stuff"
- "Teach from experience."

Rachel was sure that Aboriginal Elders held a specific place in education such as: "I want to learn more than what they (school teachers) think, and what they know…I learn best from an Aboriginal Elder teaching me." She voiced a preference for an oral speaker/teacher and did not feel learning from books was the only way to teach. When asked to put an ideal description of an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom, she was thoughtful and answered:

- "Just wise, friendly"
- "Not just one who wants to get the class over and done with"
- "Excited to teach the kids about their Aboriginal (pause) things."

It was obvious that Rachel had ideas about how to make her classroom experience more interesting, as she was quick in her responses. When she was asked about respect, she was hesitant and spoke more slowly.

Respect

When Rachel was asked how she thought an Aboriginal Elder and teacher might interact outside the classroom, she considered the cultural aspect of what she experienced by watching: "You should always treat Elders with respect . . . If the person does not know the Elder they might disrespect them . . . because they don't know them . . . because they don't know how to treat them [Aboriginal Elders] like Aboriginal people treat Elders." Rachel became a bit confused when I asked how Aboriginal people show that respect to Aboriginal Elders and she whispered, "I don't know." She paused, and went on to say, "I was just taught to treat our Elders with respect, they are a bit more wiser than us." Rachel's limitations to explain what she saw were a result of her tacit learning; that through modelling of behaviours, respect was implied but not expressed.

Rachel was quick, however, to answer how she thought an Elder would treat a teacher in the classroom: "Maybe an Aboriginal Elder might just watch over and see how the non-Aboriginal teacher would teach and maybe talk to her and say, "Maybe I'll come in a couple of times to help you out . . . Probably with respect. Maybe understanding them - understanding them when they teach and stuff." In this statement, Rachel implied that an Aboriginal Elder understands the role of teacher and would not interfere. Rather, the Aboriginal Elder would work along with the teacher by first observing and offering their knowledge. Her statement indicated that she listened to discussions of concern about the teachers in the classroom, and she is more aware of Aboriginal Elder behaviours and

how they would probably respond in a relationship across cultures. Notably, her concern that a teacher might not know how to respond to an Aboriginal Elder indicated the difference in how Aboriginal peoples know who their Aboriginal Elders were as Knowledge Holders as opposed to teacher knowledge of Aboriginal Elder roles against colonial professional designations.

In the Words of Rebecca

Rebecca worked in adult education for 15 years in a First Nations community and at a publicly funded secondary school for 4 years. The story she offered was about working with Elders in *Basic Literacy and Skills*. The approach used in the program was to teach the Elders to read and write in their own language first so they could teach their community what they knew.

> They progressed a lot faster in reading and writing in their own language than they did in English, they could learn a lot faster. And because they had a lot of skills they were able to teach and demonstrate to the other students. . . . they became the teachers whether it was working with leather craft, quilting, birch bark, quill boxes, so that was an advantage for the community members.

The Ojibwa language was a central place of focus in this adult education program. Before the community were invited into the program, Aboriginal Elders were taught Ojibwa literacy skills and then introduced to skills in reading and writing in English. In this manner, they were enabled to be teachers of their language and transfer their knowledge into other teaching and learning situations.

Rebecca began working at the high school at the same time as the OME (2007b) introduced the First Nations, Metís and Inuit Education Policy Framework. She acknowledged ethical space as,

> For everybody, which it was becoming - for everybody. When I had things going on - a lot of times it had to be during lunchtime - we got these non-Native students knocking on the door and wanting to know if they could come to the presentation because they heard about something announced over the P.A. So they were starting to become more and more involved in what is happening in the classroom for these students.

The ethical space of the [Native Resource Room], was a cultural welcoming place for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and there were open invitations for attendance to the Aboriginal designed activities. However, those activities were limited to lunch hours, and outside the mandated curriculum.

Rebecca remembers going to an Ontario Ministry of Education conference and hearing discussions on how to get Elders involved, and "how teachers, the students, and community can get all connected." At that time, awareness of Aboriginal people as resources was limited as Rebecca expressed it this way: "They said at that time that if teachers want to have resources such as Elders in the community, more or less why not go to the band office." Rebecca listed the financial limitations in their thinking:

- "A lot of teachers will not go outside the classroom and make that effort to go the band office… no teacher that I know unless they are First Nation"
- "They talked about tobacco and offering Elders tobacco but tobacco - they can't get that into the car to go from point A to point B. With all the

knowledge that they have, they should be provided with some kind of honorarium."

The rules of the institution included compensation for every unit of time expended to deliver services for students in the classroom. A teacher visiting a band office is outside teacher time in the classroom. Rachel addressed the reasons for the assumptions. Resource people were brought in to work under the umbrella of federal funds, such as from her community and the Tribal Council, and which were generally designated for the First Nations peoples.

- "Because I worked for First Nation and Tribal council (through federal funding), the Elder that was going into the community once or twice a week was able to come into the class room for probably a morning classroom and be part of the Native Resource Room"
- "Another gentleman who was working for the Tribal Council came into the school and he did circles also."

As a member of her First Nations community, Rebecca was familiar with the First Nations of the area. As part of her work, she had a limited budget devoted to meeting the needs of the students she worked for. Because of her association, she probably was able to find Aboriginal Elders interested in coming into the secondary school to provide her with assistance from time to time.

In my journal, I noted a conversation where a principal indicated Aboriginal Elders were used as in-service. I did not ask the direct question as to whether that meant an Aboriginal person was in the school working with students through federal band funds or if there was an Aboriginal person hired through the school board using funds allocated

through the Aboriginal Education Office. The funding situation is a conundrum and is felt by all parties as indicated by a band education tribal leader's earlier testament in Chapter One. To understand more, see the sections where I express more detail through my journal.

Rebecca worked on a special project that was a limited partnership between the First Nations of the area and the school, so that space could be utilized to address Aboriginal student needs. Rebecca was able to bring in resource people from time to time to assist in her work to address student needs from a First Nations perspective. An Elder might come in to sit in a circle where:

> They [Aboriginal students] always wanted to sit with the Elder so they all made sure they came in and got excused from their classes. The principal was accommodating to a lot of the students because she saw it as important to help students succeed. When the students needed someone, to see somebody, to talk to somebody, they did not want to go to the school counsellor. It was 'I want to wait until the Elder came in. I want to ask a question of the Elder.'

Rachel talked about feeling comfortable in a circle while she learned and how her teacher was part of the circle. Rebecca also talked about the circle as a place for healing, "letting go" and an activity where they were able to "sort out their own personal issues that affected their school life." There is an indication that gathering together in a circle with an Elder is a benefit for both "Native and non-Native students."

> Native and non-Native students that started to come and the circle started getting bigger and bigger and it took up the whole classroom. It helped a lot of students because a lot of them would hold things back, but, as the students got more

> comfortable with the Elder, they started trying to sort out their own personal issues that affected their school life and I seen a lot of them share a lot of stuff and a lot of them cried but they were so happy that they were able to sit there and get that out because they could not do that before.

Rebecca was not able to bring in Elders on a consistent daily basis due to federal funding limitations. However, she felt, "There is always that place in the education system for that Elder because they have so much life experiences to share and knowledge to share for a lot of students."

Aboriginal Pedagogy and Reputation in the Classroom

Western education denies the contributions of their aged. Through denial of importance of Aboriginal language, culture, and intergenerational connections, colonial education assumes that Aboriginal peoples espouse authority over the aged: "The aged were being made 'other', cast as a discrete segment of society" (McNally, 2009, p. xvi). Without a distinguished title recognizable by funding guidelines, Aboriginal Knowledge Holders might not be recognized for their worth. They are, instead, jostled to the isolations of cultural margins in education, dismissed as under supervision and effectively disconnected from the students who need to "hear what they must teach when they become the Old One" (Ignatia Broker, as cited in McNally, 2009, p. 133).

Rachel spoke about how subject content was delivered, and the reputation of an Elder. Rebecca openly offered suggestions for more scrutiny on how the schools selected people into the schools as Elders, particularly in the classroom.

> If the schools want to have Elders in their classroom they need to do the research on the Elder, because there are so many who call themselves Elders, who are not

> Elders…. I would say the true Elders have that knowledge and live that way of life.

Her description of Elders was a reflection of Rachel's list:

- "Are honourable"
- "Have the knowledge"
- "The respect to be able to help the students in the high schools – all schools, whether in elementary, colleges, universities."

Internally, within Aboriginal communities was the acceptance of individuals who are Elders in training or at a certain life stage in the Aboriginal way of living and those who are recognized as having specialized knowledge and referred to as Elders. Rebecca suggested that Aboriginal communities might need to step up their references by creating a database for the schools:

> There needs to be like a database of Elders . . . but having this kind of data base where the traditional worker, who are/mentors/ student support worker for First Nations Students so they are not, I guess trying to spend a lot of time looking for an Elder in their communities, especially if you go into a new community - looking - and you are not always certain about the Elders that are there . . . I know they have different Elders for different things

She expanded criteria for that list by expressing her thoughts about the cross-cultural safety of that list: "I think it would be a good thing to have a criminal reference check prior to going into the classroom."

Rebecca implied caution in having Elders in the classroom, and advised that one Elder at a time be introduced into the school. That Elder should be introduced gradually

as a relationship building exercise, through staff meetings, and school events such as Christmas or Remembrance Day and be visible at least three times a week.

> If a teacher wanted to utilize the Elder in the classroom then they have kind of an understanding and more of a respect, so it is not so intimidating for each or the other. So I think - and having that Elder attend whatever or thing that is happening in the school whether its Christmas time or whether it might be - Remembrance Day ceremonies or whatever it be. So I think building that relationship, keeping that Elder on, but, at the same time there needs to be more – that Elder needs to be visible in the school. It should not be once a week. You know it probably needs to be like three days a week for an entire school year, is what I think it should be in the schools. But I do not think that is really, really, happening.

Once an Elder had been identified, she suggested, that based on her experience,

> There needs to be an introduction between the teacher in the classroom and the Elder - and then brought into the classroom, just so the Elder can sit and observe what is going on in the classroom. Then perhaps the next time they go in, they will be able to contribute whether it be for a history class or an arts class, whatever it might be, that the Elder is there to kind of work alongside the teacher if the teacher does not have the knowledge of the Aboriginal or the First Nations content that they are looking for.

Rebecca explained a need for time for the teacher and Elder to develop a relationship before entering the classroom and prior to any presentations by the Elder. She felt the Elder needed to sit and observe first. How they would work together from then on would be based on the gaps in knowledge that the teacher had concerning the subject.

Rebecca was cynical about specific situations such as having an Elder in to work with a new teacher.

> You know it is so different - kids are so different, when you have somebody sitting in the classroom. Because a lot of times a lot of kids are so out of control whether behavioural or whatever that might be. But I think an Elder in the classroom – I think they would benefit from having an Elder in the class but then again there is always the teacher who will say, "Why can't I have a German senior come into the classroom?" I went through that out there.

The comments that Rebecca heard from teachers were bold and uninformed. One of the stories she told was about her role to set up heritage day for the Aboriginal students.

> And when we had heritage day – "Why can't I celebrate my heritage? I am Scottish or Irish". That was at a staff meeting when I introduced them to the idea. These are the things going on. I got jumped on. "Why aren't we celebrating everybody's heritage out there?", "I am in favour of equal opportunity for everybody". I said, "I am just doing my job, what I am supposed to do here. That was already planned but next year if you want to help out we can celebrate your heritage, and everybody's heritage here". But she got all bent out of shape just for nothing but every time I seen her it was – oh god – I just knew she was going to say something like this.

Rachel had also indicated respect as the basis for the relationship between a teacher and an Elder, "I think there needs to be that respect regarding the Elder. I know a lot of times there is that respect." In every cross-cultural relationship there was usually at least one individual who lacked acceptance of different cultural protocols concerning respect.

Rebecca offered a story of one such observation. Although Rebecca spoke calmly, a sense of her feelings about the situation could be felt as she tapped heavily on the table while she spoke and described how the Elder responded.

> I did come across one time where the one teacher was kind of – how can I say, what can I say – a bit - not rude but kind of, just sarcastically said things that made the Elder feel uncomfortable and the Elder did not say anything at that time. Just because of the situation that was happening. So I think out of respect she did not say anything. But at the same time, I think there needs to be that relationship building between the Elder and teacher.

According to Rebecca, relationship building between Elders and teachers in the school must be taken one step at a time before the Elder could enter a classroom and be safely accepted. If an arrangement were made to have one Elder rotate from class to class, then all students could have the opportunity to know more about First Nations peoples. There was no formal survey of Aboriginal peoples and their areas of expertise and this was demonstrated in her statement as to who might be available in math class.

> It would be nice if this Elder was able to rotate – one day rotate into another class. I don't how to what extent you can use an Elder in a math class . . . I mean if they are able to rotate whether you know – for this class or that class - so that way the entire school body is familiar with that Elder and I am sure the students would learn and understand more about First Nations people. So I think whether they rotate they would become more involved in the school as a whole would be a good idea but how that would go over is another question.

The steps to putting an Aboriginal Elder in the classrooms within the geographic location in question are given from Rebecca's perspective through the story of her experiences working in a high school. Rebecca's suggestion is to have the Aboriginal Elder be visible throughout the school year first. This step would allow an Aboriginal Elder to be introduced gradually.

Story I

At the beginning of Rebecca's introduction, she indicated that teachers were expected to go to the First Nations Band Council to request Elders as resources. She shared a story of how three young men requested her service as an Aboriginal First Nations person hired by her First Nation to work in the school. The point she makes is that the students did not approach their teacher with their request. They requested that she speak on their behalf to the music teacher to revise their curriculum to meet their needs based on their skills and expectations to complete a culminating activity by making a Big Drum for their school. Although she did not have that skill, nor in traditional terms would it be her role to teach the young men how to do it, she approached the music teacher with her knowledge and negotiated an outline for the activity. She would search for, make contact with, and arrange for an Aboriginal Elder to come in to assist the young men. "But this was a different Elder from the one who went to school every day." By the end of the course, five young men had completed the task as well as learned the traditional ceremony, two songs, and teachings. The school could hear them practicing and learning songs at lunch hours. The music teacher acknowledged their success: "I could not get them guys to sing one note in the classroom let alone play an instrument – If I had known they could sing I would have let them bring in this big drum in the music class."

Reciprocity was evident when the boys accepted non-Aboriginal students around the Big Drum and taught them what they had learned. After that, more Aboriginal students were able to learn from another Elder in the music room who taught them how to make hand drums.

Story II

Another story Rebecca shared was built on the notion that there is an advantage to have a knowledgeable Aboriginal person in the school that understands the cross-cultural element in knowing one another such as how to view respect and when that is not reciprocal, the students respond and then are labeled as at risk.

> You are seeing these young boys come in and they are kind of labeled as 'at risk' but they were not 'at risk' at all. There was nothing 'at risk' about them. A lot of teachers seen them as 'at risk' when in fact, it had nothing to do about being 'at risk', but it was all about respect. When their teachers did not show these young guys respect, well, then they did not get it back either. Because I seen it.

Rebecca then went on to relate her story about how respect was built into an outdoor program. Rebecca is highly respected by the students and the school. She is in that stage of being a grandmother and, therefore, a teacher of certain knowledge. Because of her knowledge she was invited to co-teach. The respect between the two instructors was obvious and they recognized one another's areas of expertise. The mixed cultural group of students practiced that respect.

> I was co-teaching with one of the teachers who was this kind of an outdoorsy kind of a guy, one of the teachers at the school. We kind of taught whatever we were better at. When it was my turn the guys - some guys were talking, and they were

> like, “Hey be quiet! Miss is speaking!”. But that was laid out the first day about respect and that teaching of respect, which was provided for them. So they knew like, when we had a video, or, anything that was going on, they loved it all. So I think when you can build that relationship up of respect with any student, they are going to succeed…. not one kid dropped out. They were all successful and I think the attendance rate was really, really high because they wanted to be there.

The story of the outdoor trip was also about the participation of the young boys who learned to drum and sing. Even though they did not have the Big Drum with them, they were able to use what was available to them and sing under the night sky. At the end of the trip, Rebecca paid tribute to the boys by recognizing their participation as an important phase of their learning and stage of their growth. The act of recognition itself created an emotional reaction for their success.

> We were just falling asleep, the sky was just filled with stars, and then, all of a sudden you could hear them. They used these barrels as drums. They were all singing out there. It was so neat and I just felt like crying! So when we were done our last day and got all the gear back in trailers and trucks, we had a circle. It was so amazing! Probably every young guy talked about how much he had learned, and they wished everyone had the opportunity to take Outdoor Ed. and a First Nation component to be included in the curriculum. A couple of the young guys even cried because they had learned so much when they realized how much they grew. When it was my turn to speak, I said to them, “You came in as young boys, and today, your last day, I see you are leaving as young men. It means so much to

> me! You make me feel so proud!" And everybody was so happy! And everybody just cried.

Rebecca's recognition of the experiences the boys went through speaks of a relational curriculum where they were appreciated for their work. "If education can be that way, how much more successful those students, who teachers think are not successful, would be. Go beyond those four walls and make the experience memorable and exciting and get them involved!" Rebecca's perception of successful education is to create opportunities where the students can exhibit their cultural needs, skills, and offerings. She demonstrated her awareness of what that means to the students by acknowledging them upon completion of their work. Rebecca could not determine if the course was held in the same manner the next year as she had left the school.

Are Aboriginal Elders Teachers?

Rebecca spoke specifically about having Aboriginal Elders present in art and history class. Her belief was that the teachers needed to get to know the Elders first and "There has to be that *trying* to seek out that Elder for whatever subject or interest that they are needed for." Rachel had expressed her belief that there were Elders who had experienced knowledge and that was different from teaching from a book. Rebecca also indicated this perception:

> I think, sometimes, if an Elder does not have the knowledge, in a specific subject, whether it be art like they never did art in their life, but it might be Elders who have been artists all their life, and can share their art, or talk about how they got started. I know a lot of the Elders don't have the education, but, they do have the knowledge that is required and they probably have a lot more knowledge of a

> particular - whether it is the history of their community, or the treaties or what ever it is than the actual teacher in the classroom.

Both Rachel and Rebecca recognized that Aboriginal students are not able to assign Aboriginal Elders with the title of teachers within the school system. Rebecca gave her reasons.

> That is never. We refer to them [Aboriginal Elders] as teachers but if you call them a teacher in front of another teacher, you know, they get all bent out of shape. But really, like I mean what else do you call them because they are our teachers. So whether we use the First Nation name, you know, even if we call them Kinomaage- I mean that is still somebody who teaches. Do they really need to they know what Kinomaage means? (Laughing) So we can still call them teachers, right? Maybe we need to call them Kinomaage, you know. Because they are the Elders and they have earned that name.

Rebecca discussed the issue further of recognizing Aboriginal Elders in the school as a need for the teachers to understand the cultural differences in knowledge sets and provide them with an opportunity to recognize how the school and Aboriginal perspectives can work together through the roles of each teaching culture. Rebecca offered an understanding of Aboriginal Elders as life teachers.

> I think if there needs to be that understanding maybe the teachers of the school, need to be given that teaching on why they are called our teacher. Maybe they need to kind of, look at how – not to separate, or distinguish the two [but rather recognize] the two very important, kind of teachers there are. There are the

> academic teachers. There are life teachers, perhaps is who and what they [Aboriginal Elders] are - life teachers.

However, as Rebecca tried to reason how to go about recognizing Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded school system, there were signs of her feeling irritated as she tapped harder on the table,

> How do we put that kind of a (tapping) - I don't know whether it would be a standard (tapping) or like a level because they have a lot of knowledge. So how do we provide those teachings so the teachers do not get all bent out of shape when you call them [Aboriginal Elders] teachers as well. So there has to be that understanding between the Elder who is a teacher and that academic teacher. Even if we are going to use Elders in the school I think it would be really good even if we were able to have - like - with their PD [professional development] days having something to do with First Nations peoples, whatever it might be.

Rebecca's description of the reactions of the publicly funded school teachers hearing students refer to Aboriginal Elders as teachers as "bent out of shape," signals a need for a cross-cultural session. Rebecca suggests a need for PD days

> I think having a PD day for teachers to kind of learn more about First Nations people and if they have any questions and maybe at the end, having a question and answer period at the end but I think being able to bring someone in whether an Elder or a person who wants to learn more about history, law, the treaties or a combination of a lot of things.

Rebecca was not confident that the process would be easy to have Aboriginal Elders understood as life teachers during PD days. She felt there would be teachers who would resent such attempts:

> Within the school system there will always be those teachers: "Oh no not again – another one of those Indian stories". Like you have those two people over here who get: "Oh my god, no, not this, I don't want to sit in that room through this ". I think that is important where you got - on the other hand you got teachers who want to learn more. So I think, like, once a year - the PD days should be about First Nations people.

Rebecca understood the limitations of the OME (2007b) First Nation, Metís and Inuit Education Policy Framework. She knows the priorities of the framework and doubts the schools will focus on certain issues such as learning more about the concerns Aboriginal peoples have about their education and how it is delivered. She presupposes the response as "Oh yeah it is a good idea but, you know, again it is - until we get there – there are other things that are more important."

Elders may have quintessential knowledge as a whole and as individuals; they embody model attributes of knowledge and wisdom. Rebecca makes another suggestion on how the school might use a school Elder. The school Elder can be a bridge between teachers and an invited Aboriginal speaker during those PD days to be a support, offer guidance, and understanding.

> But the school Elder might not have that knowledge so they can bring someone in to kind of facilitate that day and the Elders are also there - as support and guidance, understanding - that would be another way to develop a relationship, or

> provide the teachers with a better understanding of First Nations people, Metís, or Inuit.

One of the issues about making change is the extra work. Rebecca recognized the need for partnerships, whether it is with the local First Nations or an organization that could offer support and identify Aboriginal Elders who could be utilized in the school. However, she indicates there needed to be someone in the school to act as the bridge to link the needs of the students, teachers, and administration with the Aboriginal cultural resources.

> It would be really nice if there might be, even with a partnership with First Nation community in the area or First Nation organization – [that could] contribute to the Elder being involved in the school. The Principal and Vice Principal have a lot to do already so it is important to have an Aboriginal support worker or whatever they call it in the school now, to make those connections and those links and be that 'in between' to have everything happen.

Summary of the Interviews

There are cross-cultural barriers for Aboriginal peoples when suggesting solutions for the success of their children in education such as placing Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded classrooms. The polite overtones in each of the respondents about how they perceive the importance of Aboriginal Elders in the classroom is deceiving. Both respondents are expressing the undercurrents of discontent in the publicly funded education system. Rachel, an Aboriginal student, would have enjoyed attending her classes more if an Aboriginal Elder had been in the classroom where Art, Native Studies, History, and Ojibwa Language were taught. Rachel would prefer to see these subjects as

one unit of study. She would have preferred pedagogical experiences, such as listening to the stories of experience, and drawn into discussions rather than directed to learn from the same book as her teacher. She was not sure that all teachers would treat Aboriginal Elders with the same kind of respect she was taught.

Rebecca's background experiences included working with Aboriginal Elders, to facilitate their place as teachers in their communities. The Elders learned to speak and write in their own language first before they were given basic literacy and skills in the Settlers world of education. She spoke with confidence as a liaison, mediator, and employee in a secondary school where she worked to help actualize student success. She was able to identify and match the Aboriginal Elder with the skills required to meet the needs of students. It is questionable whether the teachers would use the database of community recognized Aboriginal Elders if it were created. They might not recognize the needs of their Aboriginal students.

Rebecca noted there would need to be a period of relationship building between Aboriginal Elders, one at a time, for at least a period of a year. This would be an analogous activity toward building respect and acknowledging the distances in relations amongst all parties. Rebecca had her cautions, however, as to how the Aboriginal Elder might be treated within the school system. She shared her story of how some of the teachers in the secondary school resisted having Aboriginal cultural representations in the school. Although Rachel could not tell a story of teachers at her secondary school disrespecting an Aboriginal Elder, she was aware of the possibility if only because the Aboriginal person was not recognized as a Knowledge Holder. From the accounts of both respondents, it was clear that there are differences on how the value of respect was

demonstrated. When the teachers were not reciprocal in their behaviours concerning respect, and when a student displayed resistance, such as by not attending classes, the student was labeled as at risk.

An interesting similarity of the interviews is that neither Rachel nor Rebecca specified a particular set of learning required for Aboriginal Elders to be in the classroom. Rather, Rebecca sketched out a scenario as an opportunity through Professional Development for Aboriginal Elders to be involved and a teaching applied to express Aboriginal Elders as impartial Knowledge Holders with a role to play in the lives of the secondary students. At the time of the interviews, I was not aware of any module that would address this issue. The most positive outcome of having an Aboriginal Elder in the publicly funded secondary school would be in the cross-cultural sharing of pedagogies. Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of such a study would be the school system's penchant for learning from textbooks and exchanging oral pedagogy into the written word, thus removing the Aboriginal Elder from the classroom. Mason (2008) traced such an activity in British Columbia's First Nations studies program.

There is clearly a boundary that separates the requests of Aboriginal culture from being enacted in the publicly funded classroom unless there is a student request that a teacher will take into consideration. Perhaps the prejudice against Aboriginal spirituality is unconsciously carried from Egerton Ryerson's time when he supported a separate curriculum, such as offered in the residential schools, and that conveniently cut the ties between the Aboriginal Elder and child. This became clearer as I worked to establish a relationship within the two school boards of the locale.

Final Summary of Journal and Interviews

The project was designed to include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to reveal their perspectives as they reflected on pedagogical implications for Elders working as professional resources with teachers in the classroom. Although the study did not extend into classrooms, institutional and Aboriginal knowledge was brought to the surface, exposed and ready for negotiation.

My experience during the exploratory process as I attempted to identify a school classroom in which to conduct research, illuminated the difficulty of influencing participatory action research across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in publicly funded schools. I used Keller et al. (2006) to gage my progress: "Community based research is that space where the ideas and the practices of these different worlds can be explored in collaboration" (p. 12) without "replicating mainstream, dominant views of research that are inherently hierarchal and grounded in western epistemological categorical practices" but embraces "Aboriginal holistic world views and practices" (Kenny, 2004, p. 35). The process revealed the messiness and deep silences of cross-cultural research when the proposed steps are intended to:

1. Influence relationships between the publicly funded school systems, and their neighbouring Aboriginal communities.
2. Implicate local research policy
3. Encourage Aboriginal peoples to be involved as stakeholders despite the funding source
4. Involve Aboriginal peoples in activities to establish a cross-cultural research advisory committee to:

- Review a proposal for research within their geographical local that concerns student success,
- Review and gain approval of reports and academic publications to validate findings, protect against misinterpretation, and maintain respect for Indigenous knowledge,
- Determine limitation disclosures.

This exploratory study attempted to implicate the need for a participatory study to place an Aboriginal Elder in the publicly funded classroom. Without knowledge of the funding issues at stake, I was ignorant of the status of the relationships between the school board, local school, and First Nations. A committed and culturally diverse body of voluntary community members to fulfill duties as a cross-cultural research advisory committee may have been useful to inform this researcher who did not live in close proximity of the locale under study.

The realities in the publicly funded education system are impacted by funds arranged for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples attending the schools from off-reserve which is different from funding arrangements for First Nations living on-reserve. The politics of funding is a definite obstacle to arranging for cross-cultural research that might implicate change in the classroom.

The Ontario Ministry of Education defined its terms for student success and the goals by which it proposed to address student success. Therefore, the schools interpret such terms and goals within its directives and it supports the teacher in the classroom through daily lesson plans and delivery of curriculum. This study conceded the research reports on teacher time is convincing; teachers lack sufficient time to carry out the many

mandates and expectations to demonstrate their professional worth (Wotherspoon, 2008).

How would the status quo of institutionalized pedagogy be interrupted when Aboriginal Elders are in the classroom? Judging from the words of Rebecca, there will always be teachers who will resist transformative steps to merge with Aboriginal designed and delivered offerings to cross the cultural divide for the academic benefit of Aboriginal students.

Through the words of Rachel and Rebecca, there is value and belief that the education of Aboriginal students can be impacted by Aboriginal Elder presence alongside teachers in the classroom. This explorative study has provided descriptions of the undercurrents in education as obstacles for corroborative and participatory involvement of Aboriginal peoples for the academic success of their students.

It is a timely study as it is a current study that explores the current context description of how successful Aboriginal students view their educational experiences in the publicly funded classroom. Rachel was not sure how to respond and defend her position of need to have an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom based on the merits of knowledge as experience and as based on many generations of tried and true pedagogical methods. She is cognizant that the publicly funded system relies on textbooks to deliver its curriculum, and anyone who has the credentials has the right to teach on that basis.

The extended timeframe proposed to build relationships and reimburse an Aboriginal Elder as a full-time position is a thorny issue. Aboriginal Elders cannot be introduced into the public school system under their own title but must be fitted according to the dictates of the funding body, and that includes their supervision to meet the criteria for success. Under First Nations federal funding, services for Metís and Inuit

peoples would be ignored as well as any other First Nations person who is not from the funding source community.

There were many complications. There is evidence that Metís peoples have been successful in asserting their curriculum needs as they have designed a unit for dance and indications are that unit is applied in the classroom. However, this study did not determine whether an Aboriginal Senator would be invited to take the lead in the delivery of that unit. The First Nations would expect supervisory rights for Aboriginal Elders who are funded through their federal funds. It is unknown how relationship building would proceed when a key Aboriginal person is placed in the classroom that chooses to ignore the hierarchal rules of the public school system. There was the assumption that the school boards have responsibility to respond to Aboriginal student needs. Further research was needed to determine the prospect of First Nations funding a full time position with federal funds to work in the classrooms of the publicly funded secondary schools.

This study revealed four descriptions of the relational context with teachers in the institution of a publicly funded classroom. How the current system assumed its power and authority was indicated as a reason for resistance amongst Aboriginal students. Without knowing the cultural status of First Nations Elders, teachers may be resistant to inviting Aboriginal Elders into their classrooms. Poole's (1972) theory indicated that cross-cultural relationships in ethical space expect negotiation of differences and work to create new knowledge.

1. Generally, teachers were endowed with authoritative choice to contact an Aboriginal Elder for short-term services so long as funding was available through their school boards. Rebecca identified this as a problem for anyone

not familiar with Aboriginal culture. She recommended that there be a database of Aboriginal Elders who would undergo criminal checks. The administration of the schools had rules as to conditions for anyone to be in their schools such as up-to-date medical records and criminal reference checks.

2. Teacher status and authority were regulated within classrooms under the protection of their union agreements. Without a professional designation from the College of Teachers, Aboriginal Elder would not have the same protection under federated policy and are currently not endowed with seniority status according to policy rules. In this sense, there is no policy to specifically embrace a new position in the form of an Aboriginal Elder to teach in the classroom under federation rules and regulations.
3. Teachers assumed supervisory duties for resource people in their classrooms (this includes Aboriginal Elders). How would Aboriginal Elders be supervised? This would be a conundrum of cultural assumptions that Aboriginal Elders would need to be supervised.
4. Teachers control the classroom under the authority of their supervisors. With this understanding, any future study would need to take into consideration the relationship not only with the teachers in the classroom but, as well, the supervisors of the teachers in a cross-cultural classroom.

A common assumption was that teachers deliver lessons in their classrooms. It was not generally understood that teachers are also administrators within a hierarchy of defined roles and expectations within the school system. Any change proposed in the classroom

was reviewed as a top-down exercise to determine availability of funds, union compatibility, and additional time to be compensated such as supervisory roles.

Ultimately, the politics of who funds whom, and, therefore, who is eligible for services has not yet been sorted out. As an exercise about rights in publicly funded education, this study demonstrated that Aboriginal students are strung along a paradigm that dictates whoever controls the funding will ultimately create the curriculum and justify who can deliver it through their policies.

The data clearly indicated a cycle of acceptance, silence, complications, and then rejection of Aboriginal suggestion to address the academic success of Aboriginal students. This cycle negated the design of ethical space for ongoing negotiations. Further study is required to determine whether the relevance of relationship building as a strategy for living in co-existence according to the philosophy of the Two Row Wampum Belt was intentionally ignored.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The intent of my literature review was to reveal the entangled webs of policy, politics, and power in the lives of Aboriginal peoples. I brought forward the story of Elders in Aboriginal society and their relationships with students as an intergenerational story that was purposefully interrupted in residential schools and public education. I took a critical look at the past and the methods employed by Aboriginal peoples to maintain peaceful relations. The actions of Aboriginal Elders were in keeping with the hopeful future designed by their ancestors and according to the terms for co-existence as signified in the Two Row Wampum Belt.

The Two Row Wampum Belt itself was a study of relationships as a continuum of knowledge with roots in the Great Law of Peace. From it, I traced a continuum of relationships throughout time. In the process, I uncovered the stories of my ancestors prior to the residential school era and I became connected with those records of how two solitudes developed their relationship. I reviewed the story of the Two Row Wampum Belt for relational living on Turtle Island in tandem with the universe and contemplated its importance for today and the future. I felt distressed that the particular oral design of Aboriginal language for its telling might one day be lost forever along with those Aboriginal Knowledge Holders who could expound its relevance.

As it turned out, my intended study became impossible but I was able to interview an adult educator and a student to reveal their values and beliefs about Elders in a classroom. The interpretation of the interviews and process was from my perspective as a First Nations person.

The introduction and literature review provided the background. The research methodology problematized an intervention process for placing Aboriginal Elders in the classroom as a cross-cultural imperative. The issues were brought out through interviews as respondents outlined their values and beliefs about Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded classroom.

The place of Indigenous education in the publicly funded school system was revealed as a place of uncomfortable complexity entwined with rights, policies, and politics. The task to acknowledge Aboriginal Elders as professional resources with equity in the education system to assist in the academic success of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was met with a cycle of acceptance, silence, complications, and then rejection. It appeared that the inequities of education to meet the needs of Aboriginal students began with how funding was disbursed. However, ethical space defined as a place where cultures clash in their defining intents was a continuing epic of social injustices and was not resolved.

Despite praises for the changes in Ontario's system, Fullan (2012) admits that it has not reduced gaps in Aboriginal learning: "Achievement gaps have been substantially reduced for low income students, the children of recent immigrants, and special education students (although not for "First Nation" students)" (para. 2). I expected the outcomes of classroom study would add to the knowledge of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders who had an investment in the academic success of their students with enhanced recognition of their geographic locale. I supported a decolonizing perspective with action-oriented research as more congruent with transformative goals to explore the relationships amongst teacher and Aboriginal Elders. Action oriented research in the

classroom is a results oriented process and more exploration is needed on how to implement it in a cross-cultural situation.

My cross-cultural initiative was to apply the theory of ethical space through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt in publicly funded classrooms while exploring relationships with Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded secondary school classroom. I take to heart Longboat's (2012) words:

> Future research should employ experimental research designs to evaluate the interventions as to their effectiveness or weaknesses. Objective data regarding the effects of specific interventions on student academic achievement is required to sustain change…We need to know the key interventions that can be used in frameworks to bring innovations forward in First Nations education. (p. 122)

My study was intended to examine relationships at the cultural divide, to determine a process to explore a potential intervention in classroom outcomes by placing an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom to work alongside a provincially certified teacher of the publicly funded secondary school classroom and add to the current story. Ultimately, the study might have ascertained the reception of the pedagogical knowledge and skills required for relational success amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Although the classroom experience was not realized, the storyline of Aboriginal education is persistent. The relational realities of the past continue into the present. The subject at the centre of relations between the institution and Aboriginal communities is funding. The academic success for Aboriginal students is still an ongoing concern. The conundrums for the equal academic success of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in publicly funded education is transparent when approached as a cross-cultural, local

predicament. Funding is a complex story that has an inundated core of rights, politics and policies. It is the vortex of ethical space that needs to be addressed within this geographical location.

A legacy of local ethical space in publicly funded schools was about the resistive issues that implicate ongoing rights, politics, and policies for the academic success of Aboriginal students. The current issues were historical and present, and impacted the future of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The vortex of ethical space in this study was the lack of integrated funding and the shortcomings in the relational partnership strategy to disburse funds in the locale chosen for this research. This may be a clue for inequities in academic success amongst Aboriginal students in the publicly funded classroom. The idea of an authentic, socially-just, relational partnership that incorporates cross-cultural concepts was at first accepted, was followed by silence, complications, and then rejected.

Reflecting on the Methodology: Research as Story

I anticipate challenges of my methodology in the colonial academic world. Kovach (2005) recognized Indigenous methodology as embracing the relational, the collective, and the methods (p. 30). In the delivery of Aboriginal research, the researcher must take the risks to be involved in a relationship with Aboriginal communities "because access to the community is unlikely unless time is invested in relationship building" (Kovach, 2005, p. 30). I believe the same holds true for an Indigenous researcher entering a publicly funded institution.

As I read the various documents on resistive methodologies in research, I deduced I would encounter two specific and very different researcher audiences:

- Those who have an absence of the in-depth experience in living in certain geographic locales, and
- Those who are influenced by theoretical models that guide practice and policy without attention to differences in landscapes and the people who live in them.

I conduct research to "reclaim and incorporate the personal and political context of knowledge construction" (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 7) towards decolonization. Decolonization for me as a researcher is the theory that explains how to use the knowledge I was given to be of assistance in education projects where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures meet. Feeding back new knowledge from across the cultural divide is a decolonizing and refreshing approach. As frustration gave way with each reveal of storied landmarks, I felt the peaceful embrace of my ancestors. I could see the importance of my work to uncover the enduring practices expected for Aboriginal student success. Walters et al. (2009) suggest eight principles for decolonizing and indigenizing research: reflection, respect, relevance, resilience, reciprocity, responsibility, and retraditionalization, and revolution (p. 8). Mason (2008), and, Wilson and Wilson (2002) create a stark picture of how Aboriginal Knowledge Holders were sought and then dropped. Walters et al. (2009) suggested that, "Research partners and community members, by actively seeking to decolonize and indigenize the research process, can transform the structure and nature of knowledge production" (p. 157). However, Wilson and Wilson (2002) speak to the difficulties of acknowledging Elders as contributing and voting members on doctoral committees but now requiring doctoral degrees to do so (p. 68).

Elders were integrated on an as-needed basis until the knowledge was drawn and recorded. Mason (2008) reported the British Columbia experience when the oral words of Aboriginal Elders were transferred into textbooks and then they were ignored as a resource. She provided a decolonizing solution that she called "revolutionary legitimization."

My commitment is to link the broken Indigenous story in education with reconciliation, and to assert the rightful place of Knowledge Holders as educators with value for the academic success of Aboriginal students and relationship building strategies for all students in the publicly funded classroom. Colonial decisions for the education of Aboriginal peoples of the various geographical locations are inadvertently and continuously translated over those voices needing to tell their stories about their lives, and how other lives have impacted their stories, and "how the conditions of those lives might be transformed" (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 7). Any classroom could become the ethical space in which to critically discuss and commit time on dialogue concerning the issues of cross-cultural social justice and equality as foundational knowledge to reconcile universal relationships. However, sensitivity, truth telling, and political awareness of cultural ethics in cross-cultural research were also necessary for transformative intervention in education.

As grounded theory, this study offered an analysis of a theoretical locus that the positionality of Aboriginal Elders is measured against institutional governance of policies, guidelines, and funding priorities rather than as representatives of an institution of life-long learning. The value of grounded theory allows the work of researchers to bring forward the data that categorically defines issues and for opportunity to "incite

collective action" (Chase, 2005, p. 671). Collective action requires a collective story. My experience in telling story from one culture to another may be a cautious exercise in anticipating the meaning of silences. It is in the midst of the silence that progress to place an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom came to a disappointing end, not for lack of support and encouragement but for lack of information on how current decisions over funding works in the educational system.

Significance of the Study

The contentions in public education with the involvement of Aboriginal peoples were revealed in this study as stages of acceptance, silence, complications, and then rejection. My study was designed to determine transformative acts for pedagogy to meet the needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students together by placing Aboriginal Elders in the classroom. Neither of the schools rejected having a study at their schools and this was a sign of acceptance. One school determined an interest in the study but after a critical examination of each stage of the proposal, the decision was made to counteract the steps to place an Elder in the classroom for a preferred placement of the Aboriginal Elder to be available to the school community. I suspect that the alternative to reimbursing Aboriginal services was already determined. Two other schools went through the stage of acceptance but due to timing of funds, the study could not be operationalized. Ultimately, all three schools rejected the placement of Aboriginal Elders in the classroom after a period of silence and reviewing their responsibilities and realizing the complications inherent within the institution on matters relating to Aboriginal requests and suggestions to address academic success of their students. The interviews that were conducted were independent of the proposal process to the school

boards. The interviews offered insights into the current situation when Aboriginal Elders are in the classroom and schools as well as the expectations for Aboriginal Elder involvement.

The local schools are busy places and the classroom is inundated with decisions that the Indigenous cross-cultural researcher will confront such as the funding conundrum, the power over funding, advocacy, funding cuts, cultural supports, and cultural safety issues.

The Funding Conundrum

Wotherspoon (2002) tackled the issues of funding the education of Aboriginal students as the structural mechanism "require both a political commitment to core principles and cooperation among federal, provincial, and Aboriginal governments" (p. 21). Levin (2009) identified the areas of need that would enable Aboriginal students to better succeed and this included adequate funding for on-reserve schools, "High quality teaching, good awareness, respect for Aboriginal history and culture, and strong outreach to parents . . . more Aboriginal teachers and administrators, and more Aboriginal resources and materials" (p. 690). The gaps in on-reserve school federal funding and the numbers of Aboriginal students transitioning from their home reserve community schools into publicly funded schools raised the suggestion that Aboriginal students were disadvantaged at the outset – during the transition period students expended energy to adapt within a culturally different environment. Not every publicly funded school in this geographic location hosts or sustains a native resource room where students can be prepared to address their disadvantages and negotiate at the cultural divide. Further

questions arose when the Aboriginal resources are not afforded the status as educators alongside the teachers.

Power Over Funding

As a result of my study, I perceived the power over funding is a driving gap in the relationships of those involved in the education of Aboriginal students. The resolve to address it may be beyond the local investing parties. Every First Nations community is designing its approaches to address the education of their First Nations children. First Nations control of education is to include their Elders and community members as a holistic approach for the successful education of their students. The federal government discriminates release of funding for First Nations children by identifying their residence as members of bands who live on- or off-reserve. The education of First Nations children living on-reserve is currently negotiated with the administrators of publicly funded Boards of Education, leaving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children living off-reserve under the mandates and intents of the provincial system. The funding conundrum and the mindsets of decision makers are factors that must be resolved before there can be some move towards compensating Aboriginal Elders alongside teaching staff during research within specific geographic locations.

Advocacy

Richards et al. (2008) outlined elements of success as a "relatively long history of shared decision-making and the promotion of "ownership" over funding and program decisions among local Aboriginal communities" (p. 15) with high profile leaders advocating change. The issue then becomes which of the oppressed First Nations leaders would be funded to fill an advocacy role and which funding body, provincial or federal,

would support that. Most importantly, there are indications of "the extent of shared control over the purse strings...between district officials and local Aboriginal communities." The authors noted the "creation of influential positions...willingness of school district authorities to shift ownership of decision making...local importance on core educational outcomes in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic" and "innovative programming" (pp. 15-16) were needed along with acts of advocacy do incriminate change. However, as a tribal member advocated in 2008, new monies are not processed for Aboriginal Elder positions or Aboriginal solutions.

Funding Cuts: The Threat of Research Work

Orsini and Papillon (2012) interpret government strategy is to withhold funding, to "gut Aboriginal communities of their ability" (para.1). When the government removed research funding, the intent was loud and clear that there would be a domino effect on the progress of Aboriginal peoples, particularly as First Nations argue for their cultural needs. Orsini and Papillon (2012) offer a further opinion: "The new strategy is a slow, concerted attempt to undermine Aboriginal civil society, and to gut Aboriginal communities of their ability to do the important policy work and advocacy that might improve the deplorable conditions they face" (para.1). I did not receive funding for my cross-cultural study. The First Nations Tribal Council made their position clear that they did not have funding and neither did the school boards. Yet, I trodded on, "busy doing that most threatening of activities: research" (Orsini & Papillon, 2012, para. 2) knowing I would be "guilty of the offence of producing studies and reports that highlighted some of the problems facing Aboriginal people" (Orsini & Papillon, 2012, para. 3).

Part of my work is to extend previous research and bring forward the continual social injustices and acts of racism that are hindering Aboriginal student success. The incidents are recorded, critiqued, and analyzed by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The conversation continually returns to the issues of funding.

The RCAP (1996) recommended that First Nations Elders be involved in school programs such as by inviting them to speak and being involved in the teaching of First Nations and non-First Nation students. That was about 16 years ago, time enough for another generation to enter high school. Yet, we still do not have a strategic budget that incorporates Elder teachings in the classroom on a daily basis. What we have is an old system that was designed without contributions of Aboriginal peoples at the local level.

Prior to the 1982 Constitution, Aboriginal peoples lived under a continuing story of years of oppression that was at first overt but now are subtle underpinnings that question Aboriginal student success and recognized through this study as a cycle of acceptance, silence, complications, and rejection. Wotherspoon (2012) speaks of market-based policies that structure progress with concepts of inclusion and exclusion (p. 2). Formal learning and credentials are "tools for social survival and economic advancement" (p. 5). Wotherspoon and Schissel (2000) also posit that, "social and cultural resources such as the presence of Aboriginal Elders or individuals with special skills or life history are often ignored or not represented as legitimate learning resources" (p. 11). The exercise of seeking to create space for Aboriginal Elders in the classroom led me into the inner workings of how the institution with its imperialistic understanding of jurisdiction discourages solutions with inclusions of Indigenous knowledge.

I was in the centre of activities where cultural knowledge was treated as informal and the approach was to question whether the activity was useful for funnelling knowledge as a market induced economy. It seemed to me to be a near useless task to encourage new knowledge when the waves of colonial society are bent on defending illegal claims to land and resources and thereby the reaction is to avoid the integration of Indigenous knowledge. Research by Aboriginal peoples can flesh out these underpinnings, but until the political and policy issues about funds are resolved, Aboriginal requests for their ongoing academic success in education is a disregarded story.

Cultural Supports

Levin (2009) raises a most important point about how "increased personal and academic supports were provided" (p. 690) at the university level, and questions why this could not work at the secondary level. Wilson and Wilson (2002) query the same problem as Barnhardt (1974) did nearly 30 years ago in his conclusions:

> Unless Universities (and indeed the entire educational system) employs Indigenous faculty and educators who know who they are, what they stand for, and why Indigenous programming is needed, no amount of cultural infusion into the existing educational system will make any significant difference. (p. 68)

Barnhardt's statement rings true for the secondary school. In the interview with Rachel, she expressed disappointment that a language teacher is learning from the book in order to teach. She questions the authenticity of those teachers who might have credentials to teach but lack the experience. To compensate for this gap, both Rachel and Rebecca are supportive of Aboriginal Elders who have the knowledge and experience to be in the

classroom. The difficulty will be to address the OME (2007b) policy that promotes relationship building with Aboriginal peoples as their right to be in education despite Settler notion of immigrated culture.

Cultural Safety

I listened to the question by one school administrator as to the meaning and intent of "identity building," particularly when the question comes from a student who complains about being treated as being from the "Rez." Under the tutelage of Elders, I learned to navigate the publicly funded school system and retain my cultural identity. I assume that the complaint of the student is that the school is applying their knowledge about Aboriginal peoples as limited generalities, such as from textbooks, and not learned through personal experience from the communities of their students. During her interview, Rebecca confirms that teachers would not leave the school to visit the band offices. Rachel implicates provincially funded teacher knowledge as from books. In their stories, they indicate that it is unacceptable to learn another culture through the words of textbooks alone without understanding the subjectivities within cultural contexts.

The system presumes written text as a commodity with marketable value to feed its objectivities. The system is designed for teachers to deliver its products to the students. The system is not concerned with the knowledge for past, present, and future relational connections as provided by the experienced oral telling of Aboriginal Elders. The study of how services are delivered to transform Aboriginal knowledge into the education system also requires understanding cultural safety.

Brascoupe and Waters (2009) review cultural safety phenomenon as it pertains to Aboriginal language, attitudes, and consistency in service delivery: "It is evident that the

most difficult type of discrimination to address is systemic discrimination" (p.29). "Systemic discrimination is discrimination embedded in policies and practices that appear neutral on the surface and implemented impartially by practitioners" (p. 29). They imply this lack of cultural safety in institutions is evident in the experiences of Aboriginal people and identifiable through the literature that reports social data concerning Aboriginal peoples:

> This is evident in the literature on the experiences of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system, the secondary and post-secondary education system, the health system, and in other areas of social determinants of health (such as housing, employment, nutrition, poverty, etc.). (as cited in Raphael, 2004, p. 29)

Brascoupe and Waters (2009) suggest cultural safety is an indication of how power is balanced for Aboriginal people in their interactions with non-Aboriginal service deliverers: "Cultural safety begs the question of what power means and how it can be exercised. The literature on cultural safety does not explore how power can support Aboriginal people in their interactions with non-Aboriginal service deliverers" (p. 29).

The Chiefs of Ontario (2005) *Manifesto* offers descriptions of storied education in First Nation communities and the failures of the federal government to address issues of school maintenance, underfunding, discrepancies in salaries against the provincial school system, and resources. I listened to the concerns of a secondary school principal that second level services were sorely needed to retain Aboriginal student success rather than articulation of potential connections with Aboriginal Elder Knowledge to service all student needs. The inference is that a school would prefer to institute staff, such as hosts, tutors, mediators, translators, and interpreters as well as instructional staff and second

level services trained under their pretext than produce data to determine cultural safety in their schools.

Implications and Future Directions

Richards et al. (2008) implicated university participation to assist on "rethinking educational practices to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners" (p. 15) and with Aboriginal involvements, this suggested potential success in conjunction with ethical space theory – conducting research to uncover the undercurrents that prevented ownership of learning for Aboriginal peoples. Further, specific objectives were important rather than "simply adhering to provincial guidelines" (Richards et al., 2008, p. 16). Coburn's (2005) theory of how policies were received and interpreted explains references I received to the OME (2007b). Levin (1995) explained teacher power as not having to wait "to do things differently" (p. 6). My experiences in the geographic location to merely discuss potential community-based research activities directly with teachers were not positive. I am perplexed as to how teachers might lead innovative individual ideas without waiting for supervisor support. Teachers ought to be empowered to participate in discussions about how the university supports Teachers' College initiatives, and be informed about cross-cultural research that confronts the cultural divided. The need to have foundational understandings of how performance reports are relayed to Aboriginal students, their parents, and their communities, and understand theories such as achievements gaps as debt.

The University

The OME (2007b) First Nation Metís and Inuit Education Policy Framework document speaks clearly, "increase the capacity of the education system to respond" (p.

7). The terms of academic success within the document are aligned with the current education system so that discovery of Aboriginal peoples is readdressed in ways that will "support improved academic achievement and identity building" (p. 7). However, the document suggests that whatever changes are made will be within the education system for improving literacy in reading, writing, and math. The university subsists within that system. There is no indication or recognition to mandate Aboriginal pedagogy within a formal partnership based on reciprocal relations for the benefit of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, rather there are linear statements to "increase the capacity of the education system"; "develop" and "implement" strategies (OME, 2007b, p. 7). Non-Aboriginal students are not mentioned as part of the targeted student body for relationship building and should be as they are an integral aspect of the Aboriginal student experience in the classroom.

In 1995, Benjamin Levin argued for change in secondary schools. Now, 17 years later, one of the major changes that will hopefully have a far-reaching influence on Aboriginal student success is the additional year to the Teacher Education program. It is my hope that the program will provide an additional year for pedagogical maturity for two reasons:

- That it will help direct long-term initiatives for teacher success in the classroom to address cross-cultural issues, particularly concerning Aboriginal students at the secondary school level, and
- There will be affirmations of need and skill development to collaborate with Aboriginal Knowledge Holders/Elders and Aboriginal community at the secondary school level.

I studied the OME (2007b) First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework, looked back at the 1972 National Indian Brotherhood Red Policy document entitled *Indian Control of Education*, examined the impacts of residential schools, and searched for evidence of formal school for and by Aboriginal peoples (MacLean, 2002, 2005; D. B. Smith, 1987). I looked for Aboriginal voices in the research literature and studied various data sets to make sense of the realities and dilemmas facing Aboriginal students. The current support system such as in the university setting, are indicated as important considerations for Aboriginal student success. But Bear Nicholas (2008) and Mason (2008) dug deeper into the core of how Aboriginal knowledge becomes detached and relegated to the margins. I understood Bear Nicholas' (2008) perspective of the Red Policy document (NIB, 1972):

> At first, it sounded hopeful. First Nations people were going to be trained to teach their own children in the place of the non-Aboriginals who had always done the teaching in their communities. The problem was that both governments and universities quickly found a way to use this policy to their own ends. Universities would profit by expanding their teacher education programs to take in cohorts of Aboriginal students to be trained as teachers, while governments, often working closely with corporations, would continue to benefit since new teachers would be subtly trained to reproduce Euro-Canadian ideologies, rather than their own. (p. 23)

Bear Nicholas (2008) voiced the reality that the lead for Aboriginal student success would be undertaken by the current education system rather than a parallel strategy to be designed and delivered by Aboriginal peoples. This study reveals that control of funds dictates the direction for Aboriginal student success.

Dion (2009) reached across cultural boundaries to question the need for new pedagogy that is sensitive to Aboriginal stories. Her study raised awareness of teachers as a voluntary participant academic exercise but that alone does not stem the loss of Aboriginal knowledge. Bear Nicholas' (2008) assertion predicts the loss of authentic teaching methods by Aboriginal Elders as the educational system seeks to transform itself without losing sight of its own goals. The cultural survival of the original inhabitants of the territory is at stake.

Mason's (2008) article addressed one British Columbia teacher's experience in gaining accreditation for Aboriginal Elder knowledge. Aboriginal Elder voice and pedagogy in the classroom became a text based provincially accredited course to meet institutional standards. It is doubtful the original contributors delivered that same curriculum after it became a faceless text based knowledge source. Mason argues,

> Revolutionary legitimization would not only alter the course but would necessitate radically disrupting the structures and norms of the educational system as a whole in order to bring Indigenous knowledges from the margin to the centre, on equal ground with Western ways of knowing, learning, and teaching. (p. 144)

The publicly funded school system has a long way to go in transformation of its system to align with Indigenous knowledge. The work of cross-cultural researchers to assist in the transformation will require outstanding support of the university and funding bodies.

Cross-Cultural Research That Confronts The Cultural Divide

I saw Indigenous cross-cultural research as a collective story. I go on to gather stories but it will be done in a collective manner, building knowledge across cultures so that a localized picture emerges. I continue to study details of stories in literature and

listen to the oral stories of the past that were and are relevant in a collective, zig-zag manner: building knowledge across cultures. I do not consider my research as definitive. Rather, it is a messy criss-crossing of work to bring to the surface the intent of words spoken and then make attempts to interpret the silences at the cultural divides without intruding on their purposeful resistances. I expect there will be further discussions in consideration of how decisions were made to accept or reject my proposal.

It was difficult some days to write in a way that demonstrated acceptance to what I experienced at the cultural divide in this geographic location. My contributions to collective research are my experiences of informal learning from Aboriginal Elders to retain story and culture and the intents of the Settler's education for capital gain. The reality was, I am the product of both learning paradigms. With Aboriginal Elder teacher words pounding through my thoughts, I felt challenged, daily, to keep alive the intent of my Aboriginal ancestors for an education to meet the needs of this generation and the next. Aboriginal Elders were not considered as Knowledge Holders with a proven pedagogical approach for delivering cultural curriculum. Instead, they were left at the margins until needed as entertainment in classrooms for the telling of stories, demonstrating arts, crafts, drumming, and singing. The Aboriginal philosophical knowledge base with its proven system for peaceful and co-existing relationships is a challenge directed at the educational institution to examine the gap between the two cultures.

As the Two Row Wampum Belt is about relationships, there is an expectation that cross-cultural research will assist in bringing forth stories that will help reveal the deep, unspoken, and avoided subjectivities in education. The cross-cultural researcher can

further assist by telling what they know as one who has experience of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural systems. Kovach (2009), explains Indigenous methodology in the academic setting:

> From an Indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relationships persists inside institutional centres. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, most noticeably through Western-based policies and practices that govern research, and less explicitly through the cultural capital necessary to survive there. (p. 28)

It is to the benefit of the Indigenous cross-cultural researcher to have knowledge and relationships within the institutional education setting. The danger is that the research becomes tainted with colonial overtones and interpretation that could work against the community he/she represents. This study was designed to identify an Aboriginal Elder with community support, but the teachers suggested an alternate consideration. Would I as the researcher and a known advocate for ethical space, be the Elder in the classroom? Such consideration was possible if the Aboriginal communities had agreed. However, the research itself would have changed considerably and taken a longer length of time to negotiate.

In years past, a First Nation tribal council invited my assistance to conduct a study where resistance to an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnership solutions in the classroom was exposed. I felt the frustration as the First Nations attempted to place their certified people to work alongside the publicly funded teachers during the term of a special transition project for First Nations students. Opening up new positions went against the current seniority hiring policies. This became an unresolved issue as the project went through the cycle of acceptance, silence, complications, and rejection. The

cycle was repeated in this study such as with resistance during discussions about funding an Aboriginal Elder in a classroom as opposed to being within the school; a principal raised the issue of teacher morale during layoff and bringing in new instructional staff.

Brascoupe and Waters (2009) suggested systemic discrimination appeared neutral on the surface and implemented impartially by practitioners. The issue of whether or not Aboriginal peoples could suggest and request an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom was addressed as a policy issue. The teachers were concerned as to how Aboriginal Elder placement in the classroom would align with school policy and how their time would be compensated to be involved in the study. The veracity of teacher roles was not only pedagogical but was an arm of administration to ensure institutional compliance. The institution is a top-down systems organization. The difficulties in institutional relationship building with Aboriginal peoples is its confusion to accommodate a different entity that claims equality in making decisions to address their Aboriginal students in education.

Parents, teachers, and administrators from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural groups wanted their students to succeed. If the study had played out, the terms of individual teacher agreements to work alongside Elders in the classroom would most likely vary from one local school to another. The results might have signalled action to disrupt the structural mechanisms that controlled the status quo. Wotherspoon (2008) addressed the status quo in education as that which regulates “teacher autonomy to influence educational policy and practise” (p. 391). Barnhardt (1974) expressed a simple reality: “Placing native teachers in the schools may not significantly improve the education of native children, if the design of the institution [the conventional school

environment] does not change. But who is to change it, and in what direction?" (para. 33). The question was not resolved: Could adequate and neutral funding encourage local schools to be involved in research that would place an Aboriginal Elder in the publicly funded classroom?

It was the decision of School Board B Superintendent to incorporate the study in a proposal for funding. In the end, it was through an Aboriginal school board mediator (Aboriginal Lead/Special Assignment Teacher) who was assigned by the School Board Superintendent to set in motion the steps to encourage teacher participation. The school board mediator was familiar with the protocols and processes to gain entry in two classrooms and assured teacher compensation with their principals' approval. The superintendent took other matters for resolve by the union based on the school board mediator's information. It was, however, the school mediator who corresponded the information that no research could proceed until funding was confirmed according to the status quo of the school policy.

Performance Reports

This study revealed power differentials in local funding decisions. First Nations students were particularly vulnerable to interpretations of their success.

1. With additional federal funding, the individual First Nations may have discovered avenues of success for the students in their communities.
2. First Nations living off-reserve under the umbrella of provincial funding are not recognized for their success unless they self-identify.

Such awareness indicated the need for further study to take into account the funding differential for success in any one group of Aboriginal students. A longitudinal study

would better reveal experiential and intervention outcomes for the success of all Aboriginal students and should include a component to integrate non-Aboriginal students as inclusive in ethical space.

If "policy makers pursue goals that are measured" (Richards et al., 2008, p. 17), then local Aboriginal communities should expect to receive performance reports as objective data on the performance of their children and, if not satisfied, question the policy in place and question the processes for policy implementation. A strong relationship with teachers in the classroom is a pathway to achieving this objective. Levin (1995) indicated teachers do not need to wait for a policy to make changes in their classrooms that will benefit student learning. There are, however, limitations in reaching teachers to suggest changes, depending on how their supervisors interpret the school and board policies. While I was enabled to communicate by meeting face-to-face with one set of teachers within one school board about my research, I was prevented from doing so in another school. It was apparent that each school board interpreted the OME (2007b) policy concerning relationships differently.

Levin (1995) anticipated that the system lacks "processes to collect information about its context and vehicles for processing that information...This requires thought, discussion, analysis" (para. 11). For example, the data gathered from Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is not released to the First Nations communities, Tribal Education Directors and Managers, or their Chiefs and Councils. The data were considered private and confidential. I have yet to learn of publicly funded schools that have local Aboriginal community representatives prepared to be involved in such a process in Ontario. I have yet to learn of an Aboriginal community who has processes in

place to disburse the outcomes of such tests so that their parents, families, and Elders would understand and rally to support their student to be "self-motivated, independent learners" as advocated by Levin (1995, para. 24). Without full and interested Aboriginal community members in the education of their students at the local level, Aboriginal student learning is "dictated by others" (Levin, 1995, para. 24).

Richards (2008) suggested the need for "more emphasis on Aboriginal student outcomes . . . more consistent use of data on student outcomes . . . targets for improvement . . . more involvement of Aboriginal leaders and parents in school success" (p. 9). Based on data from British Columbia, Richards et al. (2008) make the case that Aboriginal students living on-reserve tend not to achieve as well as those living off-reserve but socioeconomic conditions also figure into the data. The insight of one school board superintendent determined that the First Nations peoples living on-reserve were succeeding more often than their relatives living off-reserve. If this study had continued, perhaps, a terse connection might have been made concerning the control of funds by First Nations to apply federal dollars. It might also have revealed whether or not there is potential need for Aboriginal Elders in classrooms to ameliorate stories of academic success for all students.

Achievement Gaps as Debt

Ladson-Billings (2006) offers substantial arguments towards understanding achievement gaps as related to debt. Her arguments call out to the debt incurred through neglect of attention to the needs of cultural groups for an education equal to the privileged members of society. Issues of power, cultural safety, and costs versus investment are at the crux of arguments to employ Aboriginal Elders in the classroom.

Yet, the cost would not be a debt incurred by Aboriginal peoples; rather, the debt is a result of the power struggle to overcome the rights of Aboriginal peoples through an assimilation process. That is against their will and that includes how colonial education neglected to recognize Aboriginal Elders as committed investors in the future of their children for seven generations to come. There were no communications with First Nations peoples prior to the historical legislations for control of their education. There was no discussion for a parallel education to meet the needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Nonetheless, the extent of solutions, such as placing Aboriginal Elders in the publicly funded classroom to educate based on their knowledge, is limited to the margins of their success to gain certificates of completion within the current provincial system. I expected that local Aboriginal leaders and decision makers in research might be cautious to speak out their thoughts and opinions for fear of disturbing their current achievements in relationships at the local level. My study did not evolve to prove or disprove such thought.

I recognized that Indigenous academics are small in number and that I as well as others can become intimidated by established scholars who are evaluating claims to Indigenous methodologies and associated theories. I expected there would be resistance at the local level by participants to address their concerns about my proposal to conduct research in the classroom. I was prepared to accept the decisions of any party to end the study at any time, but I could not predict the timeframe it would take to convince the school boards and their teachers to participate. Nevertheless, I expected to be greatly challenged by academia when I present my findings of the interviews and the process

towards placing an Aboriginal Elder in the classroom as my study was limited in interview data.

If ethical space theory in education expects co-creation of knowledge concerning strategies for teaching and learning, this applied study offered clues for additional training and practices as a professional learning strategy in the classroom. The interviews brought out values and beliefs concerning Aboriginal Elders in the classroom and there was evidence that further study would be useful to ascertain the place of Aboriginal Elders in the classroom. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student success through daily relations with Aboriginal Elders in tandem with their teachers over the term of a semester may have generated signs of respect as a factor for success. The study might have been beneficial to "facilitate this dialogue and to create the potential for new ways of thinking and understanding" (Ermine, 2008, p. 28). Ermine (2000) suggests that it is in ethical space that two cultures can come to an understanding, as there is a process to follow: "creation of new knowledge," alignment of this new knowledge, and activity to "develop concrete arguments and concepts that articulate" (p. 140-141). The jostling of voices brought discomforting truths to the surface. The knowledge of how the education system responds to Aboriginal suggestions and requests is not new. However, the knowledge in this time of renewed interests about social justice issues needs to be pursued for realignment to consider Aboriginal Elders in the classroom.

Conclusions

The policies of the education system do not define partnerships with Aboriginal peoples at the level of the publicly funded classroom. During the making of Treaty #3 of October 3, 1873, Chief Sakatcheway used strong language to assert intent for education

in a co-existing relational manner that advocated the ideas of working together as partners:

> If you give what I ask, the time may come when I will ask you to lend me one of your daughters and one of your sons to live with us; and in return I will lend you one of my daughters and one of my sons, for you to teach what is good, and after they have learned, to teach us. (Morris, 1880)

Sakatcheway intent as expressed through spoken language across cultures is one of reciprocity rather than as an oppressed human being struggling for recognition. The dilemma is acute. I grew up in a culture that did not train me to think or act as a marginalized person, or treat others as such. I sat with the older people of communities and listened to their stories, not so much different from that time when the Elders were thinking how to reach across the cultural divide to have the newcomers understand how to live in co-existence under the Great Law of Peace. It was not until I left the safety net of my cultural community that I felt but could not explain the distance between my expectations for a publicly funded secondary education and the pedagogical methods that took away the control, and the ability of cultures to speak in their own language and share experiences. My self-reflective study became a dragging self-confrontational battle as I flinted and chipped away at words, much like the focused artist of arrowheads. I worked diligently to find, in the English language with its noun based design, what I was taught on how to be willing to meet at the cultural divide and co-create knowledge as a result of a relationship building rather than as an academic who feels at risk of being further subjugated to racial margins. I sought to be recognized as an Indigenous cross-cultural researcher rather than solely as an academic elucidating the peculiarities and nuances of

Aboriginal culture. There were instances in my cross-cultural experiences that I felt confusion about what social resources I had actually gathered that were good.

If teacher practice has an impact on classroom outcomes for student success (Coburn 2005), my study might have offered a gaze into how teachers might negotiate their practice directly with the culture of concern within the classroom. My study might have offered insights into pedagogical concepts applied by Aboriginal peoples in their progression into Elderhood. During the process of addressing my proposal, I felt the unresolved tensions in ethical space as another fluttering page of text, a stubborn page unwilling to receive a transformative script.

My desire is for more cross-cultural research conducted by Indigenous peoples. An Indigenous cross-cultural researcher must have cross-cultural sensitivity, recognize the need for healing, be willing to conduct ground breaking work, take criticism, and be patient as cultures work within their confines and seek to transform relationships across their own knowledge systems. I discovered the challenge of designing research, as collective story. It requires a daily awareness of what is possible for the short-term but always looking for the best ways to incorporate stories across culture for substantial benefit of both parties. I expected that an Indigenous cross-cultural research proposal would be risky and, as participatory action research, it can end at the will of any involved party. I expected I would be reading cultural safety signs, while also being aware of my own bias in examining cross-cultural settings. What I was not aware of is that Indigenous cross-cultural research in the ethical space of a publicly funded classroom might be a challenging, daunting process when the issue was about the use of funds by decision makers.

My study may be the first Aboriginal designed and delivered study with intent to apply decolonized theory with Indigenous Elders and teachers working together to make sense of their differences of perspectives for the classroom in this geographic location. Sometime perhaps, another study led by an Indigenous team in partnership with a University Faculty of Education will determine the notion of Professional Development of Elders. I recognize the probability that the academic would prefer to create an accreditation process, which would be better accepted by the Boards of Education. I would hope that such a process would involve Aboriginal Elders as a collective to oversee such a process with community support in alignment with the knowledge that is left about growing in knowledge through cultural frameworks such as the Seven Stages of Life.

Aboriginal peoples may need more funding support to have their paradigm for education included into the publicly funded classroom. Towards that end, publicly funded schools, their teachers, and unions need to be on board. My proposal to suggest Aboriginal Elder involvement for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student success brought out descriptions of unresolved issues for a specific geographic locale that may or not be claimed and owned by all parties for future discussion.

Rick Hill, coordinator of Deyahahage Coordinator in Ohsweken, shares his knowledge: “Sooner or later, philosophy has to turn into practice and that practice has to be nurtured” (R. Hill, personal communication, January 10, 2011). At the moment, ethical space is a philosophy and a theory, but it has potential to be a pragmatic conduit for cross-cultural relationship building. How will the story of education be told by this generation and for the next seven generations? What will cross-cultural relationships look

like at the time of the telling of the Two Row Wampum Belt story by the children of current students at the time of their graduation? Will Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students one day learn the skills on how to communicate in ethical space, as cultural students, as equals in an equitous local publicly funded school environment without the confines of historical and legislated policies that continue to intrude into the academic success of Aboriginal students and disregard their cultural safety? Brayboy's (2005) Tribal Critical Theory is an argument that Indigenous story are data due to its retelling. This study allowed the retelling of stories that concerned Aboriginal Elders in the education of their students. It demonstrated how the cycle of acceptance, silence, complication, and then rejection is a tactic employed by a colonial institution. Further, there are troubling indications of social inequalities, inequities, and social injustices that are not being addressed and this indicates racism exists in the provincial school. As such, according to Brayboy, racism is a manifestation of colonialism.

I continue to dream the success of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal secondary students within an ethical space theoretical framework that advocates the revival of relationships as expressed in the Two Row Wampum Belt and that is a reflection of the Great Law of Peace. The challenge is whether or not that vision will actualize as a relational exercise for the future of generations to come.

So far provincial funders do not have an impressive record in the academic success of Aboriginal students. However, the potential to improve its record may rest upon how partnerships are arranged at the local level between First Nations peoples and the federal and provincial government to ensure all Aboriginal students have equal opportunity to succeed without being divided into funded counterparts. Such a

partnership would require strong leaders willing to confront the issues around control of funds and recognize the contributions towards success demonstrated by Aboriginal peoples as a whole rather than in segmented studies focused on one community or one school. I believe that through cross-cultural research there can be a realization of the importance of relationship building and that can happen through a design worked out between the provincially funded teachers and that will be a conduit to close the academic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. That is, once the funding issues are resolved.

I dreamed a decolonization process. I hope more dreamers who see through the lens of the Two Row Wampum Belt are cross-cultural researchers able to expose institutional and Aboriginal knowledge. The cycle of acceptance, silence, complications, and rejection must be broken so the *Eighth Fire* can be lit and the publicly funded school system can rebuild their curriculum on the meanings of ethical space, the Two Row Wampum Belt and *the Great Law*.

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Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal refers to all Indigenous Peoples living in Canada and includes First Nations (on and off reserve, with status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit

Anishinaabe singular use of the word that the Ojibwa people use to describe themselves.

Anishnabek plural use of the word Anishnabe

Colonial relating to or characteristic of a colony

Colonization Extension of political and economic control over an area by a state whose nationals have occupied the area and usually possess organizational or technological superiority over the native population. It may consist simply in a migration of nationals to the territory, or it may be the formal assumption of control over the territory by military or civil representatives of the dominant owner (Office of the Chief Coroner, Ontario, 2011, p. 180

Cooperate (verb) work or act together

Collaborate (verb) work with one another on a project

Curriculum The term "curriculum encompasses all learning experiences the student will have in school. These include such aspects of school life as the general school environment, interactions among students, staff, and the community, and the values, attitudes and behaviours conveyed by the school (Ministry of Education, 1993. Anti-racism, and Ethnocultural Equity in school boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, p. 13).
The ten major areas of focus on policies and implementation are:

- 3.1 Board policies, guidelines, and practices
- 3.2 Leadership
- 3.3 School-community partnership
- 3.4 Curriculum
- 3.5 Student languages
- 3.6 Student evaluation, assessment, and placement
- 3.7 Guidance and counselling
- 3.8 Racial and ethnocultural harassment
- 3.9 Employment practices
- 3.10 Staff development

Education An institution of knowledge as evident in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures but delivered differently according to the choice of the created vehicle.

Elder A man or woman whose wisdom about spirituality, culture and life is recognized and affirmed by the community. Not all Elders are "old". Sometimes the spirit of the Creator chooses to imbue a young Aboriginal person. The Aboriginal community and individuals will normally seek the advice and assistance of Elders in various areas of traditional, as well as contemporary issues (Office of the Chief Coronor, Ontario, 2011, p. 180).
In this document Elders with a capital 'e' are recognized as the community recognized Knowledge Holders who have undergone the Seven Stages of life as identified by the Ojibwa people of the area of study. Elders with a small 'e' are recognized as those individuals who may be helpers or undergoing training under Elders but are recognized by family for their role.

Epistemology A study of the source, nature, and limitations of knowledge (Collins Essential Canadian English: Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2004)

Enfranchisement **"**Enfranchisement is a legal process for terminating a person's Indian status and conferring full Canadian citizenship. Enfranchisement was a key feature of the Canadian federal government's assimilation policies regarding Aboriginal peoples. Voluntary enfranchisement was introduced in the *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857* and was based on the assumption that Aboriginal people would be willing to surrender their legal and ancestral identities for the "privilege" of gaining full Canadian citizenship and assimilating into Canadian society. Individuals or entire bands could enfranchise. In the case where a man with a family enfranchised, his wife and children would automatically be enfranchised. However, very few Aboriginal people or groups were willing to abandon their cultural and legal identities, as anticipated by the colonial authorities. Enfranchisement would become legally compulsory with *the Indian Act* of 1876, where over time, Aboriginal people have been enfranchised for serving in the Canadian armed forces, gaining a university education, for leaving reserves for long periods – for instance, for employment - and, for Aboriginal women, if they married non-Indian men or if their Indian husbands died or abandoned them.[4] Two major amendments to the *Indian Act*, in 1951 and 1985, have significantly revised those portions of the *Indian Act* that relate to "Indian status," and by extension, to the process of enfranchisement." (Crey, K, n.d.) Retrieved from

http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-indian-act/enfranchisement.html

Ethical Space A theoretical term used to describe both physical and abstract or metaphysical space where reciprocal and mutually satisfying negotiations take place that involve two cultures with differing epistemologies. Poole (1972) determined that when two cultures of differing perspectives clash, ethical space is formed immediately. He discusses the differences as objectivities (institutional oppressors) and subjectivities (people oppressed by the institution).

First Nations This term generally refers to those individuals who live on the lands set aside as reserves by the Federal Government. They are Aboriginal peoples who have 'status' and receive federal funding for education and other services. The office of the Coroner, Ontario provides this definition:

Entities formerly referred to and legally recognized in the federal Indian Act as "bands." Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (1982) protects the existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations and two other distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples, Inuit and Metis (p. 180)

Haudenosaunee This word is commonly used by the Iroquois people to mean People of the Longhouse.

Indian A previous term used to identify First Nations and Metis Peoples prior to section 35 (2) of The Constitution Act, 1982

Indigenous United Nations 1948 document uses the terms Aboriginal and Indigenous interchangeably, with a tendency to use Aboriginal when referring to Indigenous Peoples within Canada. A word to describe First Peoples of the Land from a global view.

Institution The words 'institution' and derivatives such as' institutional' discussed throughout this document refers to the publicly funded provincial school system, its curriculum and organization and as managed according to the principles, politics and policies of Settler society.
"An organization, establishment, foundation, society, or the like, devoted to the promotion of a particular cause or program, especially one of a public, educational, or charitable character". Retrieved from www.dictionary.reference.com

Knowledge Holders Aboriginal Knowledge Holders are community recognized Elders with specialized knowledge who carry on the responsibilities of life worlds within the life-long learning paradigm. They are also recognized as Aboriginal teachers, guides, and mentors

'Language of possibility'

A phrase used to express the freedom in dialogue to speak words of meaning and explore differing cultural epistemologies in ethical space

Métis In 1982 the Federal government amended the Constitution to include people of mixed heritage (the Métis) as one of the three Aboriginal groups in Canada. By virtue of their inheritance and historical relationships with fur traders, they have attributed rights but they have limited rights in comparison to First Nations peoples. They do not have reserved land.

Mino-bimaadiziwin A philosophical word in the Ojibwa language that means to live a good life while adhering to concepts of balance within the four domains of the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental.

Objectivity The state, quality or intent of relating to actual and external phenomena by being undistorted by emotion or personal bias, thoughts or feelings
Poole (1972) offers his description:
Objectivity is what is commonly received as objectively valid, all the attitudes, presuppositions, unquestioned assumptions typical of any society. Objectivity implies the acceptance of the dominant social, ethical and religious views in that society. Objectivity is, for all practical purposes, the totality of what is taken to be the case, believed to be the case, affirmed to be the case. Objectivity is the totality of received opinion on what is acceptable/not acceptable', desirable/not desirable, good/not good, etc. Objectivity in any given society in fact gets defined as the political and social *status quo*. (p. 44-46)

Ohngwehonwe This word describes the Iroquois people in their language as 'original' or First Peoples on Turtle Island. They may be referred to as Haudenosaunee or Iroquois in the literature or as people of the Six Nations Confederacy

Pastolozzi Theory Pestalozzi focused on education reform as the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. He believed that a successful education relied on

the relationship between child and teacher of positive development of the individual rather than for societal needs.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
The Federally appointed Royal Commission produced a five volume review of the reality of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including a 20-year plan to right the socioeconomic difficulties that have existed in Canada for over 100 years.

Sacred Medicines There are numerous plants considered to be sacred and as medicines with various healing properties of the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical realms of Aboriginal epistemology. They are usually gathered, cultivated and stored with sacred consideration and used with ceremonial care. The four plant medicines usually identified for smudging are tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar

Sachem a leader or member of the governing body of the League of the Iroquois or Six Nations Confederacy

Settler This term refers to the population on Turtle Island who arrived from another land and settled within a colony.

Shawane Dogosiwin an Anishnabemowin word that embraces the ideas of "being respectful, caring and passionate about Aboriginal Research (Aboriginal Education Research Forum, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2004)

Six Nations The people who are from this reserve are called the Six Nations in English, or the Iroquois in French. The Six Nations is originally made up of five powerful Indian tribes or First Nations: the Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, Cayuga and Oneida. These five groups founded The League of Peace or Iroquois Confederacy, which governed with a council of fifty chiefs elected by female Elders from each Nation. This system of government was one of the earliest forms of democracy. Its organizational structure was used later as the basis of the United States government and the United Nations. In 1712, the Tuscarora Nation joined the Five Nations.

Smudging Smudging is a process in Aboriginal gatherings to initiate balance and harmony to begin gatherings. It consists of the act of directing the smoke of a plant or leaf, which is considered a sacred medicine (may be sweetgrass, sage, cedar, tobacco or a combination) unto one self as it releases its scent.

Status quo Wotherspoon (2008) addressed the status quo in education as that which regulates "teacher autonomy to influence educational policy and practise" (Wotherspoon, 2008, p. 391).
A quote from dictionary.com explained: "1833, from L. status quo "the state in which," hence "existing state of affairs." Also status quo ante "the state in which before, state of affairs previous" (1877). Online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved March 24, 2014, from http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/status quo

Subjectivity A personal interpretation and vision with intentness on internal reality and thought. Poole (1972) argues for deep subjectivity as a concern for a standard of objectivity that is a force with "personally won philosophical commitment" (p. 152).

The Great Law of Peace
The Great Law is recognized as a universal understanding by Aboriginal peoples on Turtle Island or North America. It is an oral rendition that speaks about the importance of relational living as co-existence and includes the ecological and cosmological perspectives as well as the epistemological, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. It highlights one's conduct as a human being for daily living amongst all that exists.

Tobacco There are numerous plants considered to be sacred by Aboriginal peoples and as medicines with various healing properties of the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical realms of Aboriginal epistemology. They are usually gathered, cultivated and stored with sacred consideration and used with ceremonial care. The four plant medicines usually identified for smudging are tobacco, sweetgrass, sage, and cedar

Two Row Wampum Belt
A symbolic reference consisting of white and purple wampum beads weaved into a belt and used as mnemonic tool to recall an agreement for co-existence. There are many wampum belts. This belt consists of two rows of purple beads separated by a row of white beads and set against a backdrop of white beads. The rows are symbolically represented as two vehicles – a ship and a canoe travelling alongside one another on water. The water is represented as the white beads. The first Two Row Wampum Belt dates back to 1613.

Tri-Council Three national research councils that work together to establish research policy:

CIHR – Canadian Institutes of Health Research
NSERC – Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council
SSHRC – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

These three agencies promote the ethical conduct of research involving humans and adopted a TCPS * Tri-Council Policy Statement in August 1998 and an Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics in November 2001. For more information on how research supports Aboriginal peoples see Interagency Secretariat on Research Ethics (ISRE) (2005)

Turtle Island This is the English translation of the traditional name for North America, which reflects both key aspects of many Aboriginal creation stories and the fact that a map of North America is shaped somewhat like a turtle.

Appendix B

Pre-Interview Questions for All Interviews

In Aboriginal communities Elders are teachers and holders of knowledge that connects the past to the present. Previous studies (Berger, 2008; Bougie, 2006; Cooks, Chiado and Thomas, 2009; Longboat, 2008; Ontario College of Teachers, 2006) indicate there is Aboriginal student success when Aboriginal Elders are in the schools. I will be seeking teacher, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholder input concerning Aboriginal Elders as professional resources in the classroom.

Original Questions (received in Information Letter)	**Probing Questions (Based on school administration feedback)**
1. What might Aboriginal student success look like from your own point of view?	The Ontario Ministry of Education has posted its indicators for general student success on line. However, this question is asking for your input to determine your values, beliefs and assumptions and perspectives about Aboriginal student success
2. Provide a description of the Aboriginal Elder who would succeed in the school classroom with teachers and students.	What might be the qualifications/attributes of an Aboriginal Elder who can demonstrate success in supporting teachers and students?
3. In what ways might the school involve Aboriginal Elders in the daily learning process of Aboriginal students?	If the everyday social life of Aboriginal students impact their daily learning process, how might the school involve Aboriginal Elders?
4. What do you anticipate will be the methods an Aboriginal Elder might use to build relationships with the teacher in the classroom?	How do you see an Elder building relationships within the school community? Do you anticipate they would use the same methods in the classroom? (If yes, explain)
5. What do you anticipate will be the methods a certified teacher might use to build relationships with the Aboriginal Elder in the classroom.	How do you see teachers building relationships with an Elder outside the classroom? Do you believe that relationship would be the same inside the classroom?
6. In what classroom might an Aboriginal Elder be best placed for this project?	In what ways might an Aboriginal Elder contribute to this project? Are there any subjects you believe would benefit from the knowledge of an Aboriginal Elder?

7. Do you feel that Aboriginal Elders need to be specially trained to be in the classroom/school setting prior to working with teachers in the classroom? If so, what should that training look like?	Do you feel that Aboriginal Elders need to be specially trained to be in the school setting prior to working with teachers in the classroom? If so, what should that training look like?
8. Do you feel there needs to be a specific association of a name for the Aboriginal Elder placed in the classroom? *If so what might that be called in the language of the people in this geographic area? i.e. a suggestion brought forth was the word SOT in the Cayuga language that associates Elders with respect – neither is separate from the other. Therefore, instead of calling an Aboriginal person "Elder" we might call that person "Sot" and the school administration might understand the importance and role of this individual in the school*	

This study has been reviewed and received clearance from the Brock University Research Ethics Board (File#10-224). If you have any questions about this study, contact the Principal Student Investigator, Catherine Longboat or Faculty Advisor (where applicable) Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir via e-mail at Michael.Manley-Casimir@brocku.ca.If you have any comments or concerns about participant rights in research, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 extension 3035 or reb@brocku.ca